United Nations A/51/PV.25

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

25th plenary meeting

Monday, 7 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail .... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is His Excellency Mr. Amdemicael Kahsai, Chairman of the delegation of Eritrea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kahsai (Eritrea): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the fiftieth regular session of the General Assembly.

The Assembly will agree with me that present-day international relations are characterized by two contradictory trends. On the one hand, there is an overriding desire and wilful movement to enhance international cooperation through the expansion of trade and investment. This trend is inextricably linked to the pursuit and maintenance of peace and stability. However, parallel with and contradicting this positive trend, we see a proliferation of high- and low-intensity conflicts in various corners of the world triggered by different causes. The pursuit of viable mechanisms to reduce and seek a permanent solution to these conflicts in order to promote international cooperation for the welfare of mankind remains, therefore, the key challenge that the United Nations will continue to face in the coming years.

The Horn of Africa region remains, likewise, in the grips of this dichotomy. On the positive side, the countries of the region are committed to promoting regional cooperation, and continue to make strenuous efforts to this end. This is indeed manifested by the substantial progress achieved to date to revitalize the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), the regional instrument for achieving this objective. At the same time, the region continues to bleed due to grave internal conflicts within some member States. The painful bloodletting that has destroyed the social fabric in Somalia continues unabated; the internal conflict in the Sudan and the climate of regional tension created by the activities of the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime continues to deteriorate.

The pursuit of peace and stability, with the attendant opportunities that this provides for economic and social development, have special significance for peoples that have suffered the physical and psychological traumas of war. In this connection, as the Assembly is aware, my country has borne the brunt of a long war which has exacted enormous human sacrifices, leaving its economic and social infrastructure a shambles. Accordingly, peace is crucial to the young State of Eritrea to heal the scars of war, to recoup lost opportunity and to reconstruct what has been devastated.

But my Government's profound aspirations and commitment to the maintenance of peace continue to be threatened by the hostile and unprovoked acts of the NIF regime in the Sudan, whose antagonism and subversion

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

against Eritrea began soon after it took power in 1989. I hardly need emphasize here that the acts of subversion and State-sponsored terrorism are not directed against Eritrea alone, but have in fact been adopted as an instrument of policy by the NIF in its attempts to destabilize its neighbours and export its expansionist designs through subversion and violence.

In pursuit of these aims, the NIF regime has propped up and provided safe haven to assorted terrorists from various countries and facilitated their acts of sabotage and terror. Khartoum's barely veiled hand is discernible from the litany of border incursions by mercenary groups in a number of countries in the region and acts of naked terror in the international arena.

I must stress here that my Government has left no stone unturned in its efforts to reduce and stave off the climate of tension provoked by the acts of the NIF regime. As a matter of fact, for five long years my Government pursued a policy of constructive engagement, patiently and tirelessly, hoping against hope that the authorities in Khartoum would turn back from the dangerous alley that they are heading for.

Unfortunately, the language of moderation and peace only whetted the NIF's appetite to spread its subversive tentacles deeper and wider. In the event, Khartoum not only refused to heed these continuous appeals, but escalated its overt acts of terror and subversion beyond limits.

Another grave matter I wish to bring to the attention of this Assembly is the maltreatment of Eritrean refugees at the hands of Sudanese authorities. The NIF regime not only is doing whatever it can to obstruct the organized repatriation of the refugees to their home country, but is engaged in reckless and deplorable acts to drive a wedge between the refugees and the people of the Sudan, who have offered commendable hospitality during the long years of war. And when this policy did not work, the NIF regime began subjecting the refugees to arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and banishment after confiscation of their property by its security authorities. Moreover, young refugees were forcibly conscripted and given military training to be deployed in subversive activities across the border. Organized repatriation of these refugees, the pilot phase of which has been successfully achieved, is impeded by the lame excuses the NIF fabricates. All these pressures have caused the refugees to return home spontaneously at high risk.

All these acts of hostility perpetrated by the NIF regime to implement its designs of destabilizing neighbours should surely be of grave concern to this Assembly and the international community at large, given their wider regional security ramifications.

Allow me further to recall the incident that erupted between Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen in December 1995, following the latter's occupation of the Eritrean archipelago of Hanish-Zuqar, at the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Perhaps due to its sensitivity, the incident aroused immediate international concern and mediation endeavours.

The Government of Eritrea, which all along had sought international arbitration to the dispute, promptly accepted, with full appreciation, the mediation initiatives of the Ethiopian and Egyptian Governments, and later that of the United Nations Secretary-General, which greatly helped to defuse tensions and paved the way for the peaceful handling of the dispute. When facilitation by the French Government was proposed, the Eritrean Government accepted it wholeheartedly.

These decisions were taken by the Eritrean Government against a background of mendacious accusations and irresponsible campaigns by the Yemeni authorities to escalate the situation. The incident was also fanned by those in certain quarters who sought to serve their vested interests in the troubled waters. However, genuine desires and a sincere political will prevailed.

Ultimately, restraint and careful handling of the issue, in addition to positive and constructive regional and international intervention, culminated in the Agreement on Principles, signed by both parties on 21 May 1996 in Paris.

In this Agreement, both the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Yemen unequivocally expressed their desire to settle their dispute over the Hanish-Zuqar archipelago by the verdict of a court of arbitration. Developments since the signing of the document could be considered generally positive and encouraging. However, allegations were made by the Republic of Yemen that Eritrean forces occupied the island of Lesser Hanish on 10 August 1996, and the matter was hastily referred to the Security Council. The fact of the matter was that units of the Eritrean forces were on that island both before and after the signing of the Agreement on Principles on 21 May 1996. Despite this truth, the Eritrean Government withdrew its forces as a gesture of goodwill and in the interest of the smooth progress of the arbitration process and to preserve and promote the peace of the region.

The Eritrean Government has time and again affirmed its adherence to the Agreement on Principles of 21 May 1996, and expressed its commitment to abide by the decisions of the court of arbitration. I am pleased to underline that the subsidiary agreement reached between the two sides in Paris last week, on 3 October, will now allow for the proceedings of the court of arbitration to start early next year.

The agonizing and intractable reality in Somalia cannot but impel the international community to search for ways and means of expediting an end to this long, drawn-out tragedy. The complexity of the situation is too apparent to require more elaboration here. But it is clear that no amount of well-meaning external support will succeed in restoring normalcy to Somalia unless the Somalis themselves take stock of the senseless bloodshed that has torn the country apart and produce what it takes to forge peace and national reconciliation. Admittedly, the countries of the region could have played a more catalytic part in this multi-pronged effort. The lack of a consistent and coordinated regional and international initiative, however, may entail more preoccupying negative developments. Indeed, there are indications these days of a growing involvement of various external actors that seem bent on exploiting the vacuum to promote their hidden agendas. Somalia is in fact drifting towards becoming fertile ground for extremist groups. For the sake of the Somalis, and in the interest of regional peace and stability, it is vital that these trends be checked before it is too late and that the regional initiative be resuscitated.

The recent developments in the Middle East which appear to have cast some shadows on the Oslo agreement are naturally a matter of preoccupation to all those who wish to see an enduring settlement to the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Whatever the shortcomings of the agreement, there can be no alternative to the peace process. My Government therefore appeals to both sides to persevere in the process of dialogue and negotiations so that a lasting peace that ensures the well-being of all the peoples of the region will be assured.

In conclusion, we share the views of many Member States on the imperative of restructuring the decision-making bodies of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. The Security Council continues to play a vitally important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is my delegation's belief that now is the opportune moment to revitalize it, make it more democratic and improve its value, effectiveness and legitimacy so as to make it reflect the universal character of the Organization. Powerful and convincing arguments have been made by many speakers to the effect that, at present, the Security Council is neither equitable nor representative. The circumstances of international politics have altered so fundamentally that there are compelling reasons for change.

In spite of the broadly shared wish for reform, discussions so far have not really come close to the general agreement needed. It is our firm belief that flexibility and compromise will be necessary. There are a number of interesting elements in the proposals, to which thorough attention should be given so that we can try to bring about the necessary change.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): At the outset, allow me, Sir, to express my delegation's congratulations upon your election to the high position of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

The Afghan trauma, which was imposed by others and endured by the Afghan people, continues to have disturbing consequences for our nation. For the world, it may be just another trouble spot. But for Afghans, it means agony, pain, loss, psychological trauma and an unknown future. We must not forget that there is still hope. It lies in the international connection between me and other representatives and, through them, to their countrymen. The United Nations was built on that dream and today, that connection is once again being made — it is the fifty-first connection.

Two tragic dates will stand out in the recent history of Afghanistan: 27 December 1979 and 27 September 1996. Both were black days that trigger bitter memories in the minds of all patriotic Afghans. The first date reminds them of the occupation by the former Soviet Union and the second, of another occupying force, backed by another neighbour.

The force occupying parts of our homeland today is known as the Taliban — a name that became very familiar to the General Assembly at the previous session.

What was the Taliban's first act when it captured Kabul? It was to attack not a military garrison, but the United Nations office in Afghanistan. Its first act was to breach the sanctity of the United Nations compound, in violation of all accepted international norms and laws.

That is the Taliban. As European Commissioner, Emma Bonino, said yesterday, the Taliban is a force that threatens to take Afghanistan back to the dark ages. Numerous international media reports from Kabul draw a picture of an organization supported from abroad, imposing a draconian system on a terrified people. The Taliban have ordered schools and universities to close and stopped all education and employment for women. There are numerous reports from the media, the United States authorities and the United Nations on the role of the Taliban in a $75 billion heroin export industry in Afghanistan.

On 1 October 1996, *The New York Times* said that the 1 million people who live in Kabul alone had been plunged into the

> "labyrinth that is Taliban rule".

On 3 October 1996 the Reuters news agency said that, while the Taliban has tried to seek international recognition, it has been greeted with "suspicion — and fear". In just their first week in Kabul, the Taliban earned the condemnation of Amnesty International.

These are not the words of the Afghan Government describing the Taliban occupation — these are the words of Amnesty International:

> "Despite statements from their leadership suggesting moderation, it is clear that Taleban guards are busily implementing a reign of terror in Kabul ... Families are afraid to go out into the streets, afraid to answer their doors, and afraid that their loved ones will suffer the brutal consequence"

of Taliban rule. Amnesty International accuses the Taliban of seizing, in house-to-house searches in the capital, up to 1,000 prisoners, who were forced to walk over the front-line minefields.

French television showed the Taliban storming into the Kabul museum, where they destroyed many artifacts, relics and statues that were unique. Those artifacts and statues belonged to the Buddhist era and are irreplaceable.

I am talking about the Taliban, which is overwhelmed by foreign-fomented hatred, mandated by a foreign-crafted agenda and committed to the annihilation of the political, social and economic fabric of Afghanistan. It is an organization whose display of terror in Kabul breaks all records. In short, the Taliban are mercenaries — an illegal and illegitimate force that has been imposed on the Afghan people.

Once again, foreign interference is the main cause of the continued conflict in Afghanistan. The current state of terror and chaos, touching the lives of every living soul in Kabul, is the direct consequence of that interference. We have at our disposal hard evidence that we will submit in due course to the Security Council for appropriate consideration. What could prove that there is foreign interference better than the foreign militias, which include some officers, who were recently captured on the battlefield by the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan?

The Islamic State of Afghanistan firmly believes that the so-called Taliban is a perfect example of a mercenary force as defined by the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, adopted by the General Assembly in 1989. We are not denying the existence among the Taliban of Afghan youths who were raised across the border and attended religious schools there, but it cannot be stated too clearly that the main corps of the Taliban military staff consists of officers and militia forces from beyond our borders, paid by military-industrial magnates trying to overthrow the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The United Nations General Assembly, on 21 December 1995, adopted a resolution which condemned any State that permits or tolerates the recruitment, financing, training, assembly, transit and use of mercenaries with the objective of overthrowing the Government of any State Member of the United Nations, especially that of a developing country.

The Charter of the United Nations, in various Articles, urges all Members to develop friendly relations among themselves and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

On the occasion of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations on 24 October 1970, the General Assembly approved the

Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. The first principle declares that States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

The Seventh Islamic Summit Conference in Casablanca on 13 December 1994, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries on 18 October of 1995 in Cartagena de Indias, the General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan of 19 December 1995 and the Twenty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Minsters on 9 December 1995 held in Conakry, Guinea, all insist vigorously on the principle of non-intervention and respect for the territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan and on a peace process based on genuine intra-Afghan dialogue.

It is a matter of great disappointment that persistent appeals to the United Nations made by the Islamic State of Afghanistan to send a fact-finding mission to inquire into and investigate the level, degree and nature of foreign intervention in Afghanistan remain unanswered.

Last year, we presented facts about the Taliban from this rostrum. Our plight went unheard. We are afraid, given the accounts of documented facts by the press and our clear stand on the legacy of the Taliban, that our plight might go unheard once more. That will be even more catastrophic than the Taliban take-over itself.

The latest reports, as recent as yesterday, reveal some shocking realities and facts about the Taliban attacks on the areas surrounding Kabul, the capital. Allow me to unveil the screened and concealed crime that the Taliban, assisted by their outside sponsors, committed very recently. Exactly 26 days ago, on 11 September 1996, intelligence sources of the Defence Ministry of the Islamic State of Afghanistan intercepted and recorded a Taliban radio transmission between Nangarhar and Kandahar. That transmission says the following:

> "Give regards to the victorious Mullah Shukrullah ... Tell him that new APR weapons have already been brought to Kandahar. You should immediately send these arms, which are gas weapons, through Torkhan towards Nangarhar because we have organized a group of Taliban with special gear and are waiting for the said weapons. We can capture large areas with a single round."

On 17 September, just six days later, I personally took this report, submitted to me by the Ministry of Defence, and presented it to the State Supreme Council, convened under the leadership of Mr. Rabbani, the President of Afghanistan, in Blandage bunker, just north of Kabul, the capital. I still remember an overwhelming stillness occupied the room after I submitted the report. After a brief calmness, a member of the Council remarked that maybe the report had been passed around to demoralize State troops; hence, not enough attention was paid to the issue.

Yesterday, we obtained a shocking — and I repeat, shocking — report from the headquarters of the Government in Taloqan, which reminded me of the Supreme Council meeting. Officials of the Islamic State of Afghanistan recorded radio conversations by the Taliban in the front line around evening on 26 September, the night before the Taliban take-over of Kabul. The following assurances were reported:

> "Reassure the leaders that the new weapons have had good results in Lata Band, Bande-Ghazi and Puli-Charkhi."

These areas, for the information of the representatives, are located to the east of Kabul, the capital.

More staggering realities are provided by the eyewitness reports of those who saw the areas afterwards. These eyewitnesses have reported that they saw most of the corpses of the Government troops laying on the ground without any sign of injury from a bullet or arsenal penetration in their bodies. However, they did reveal that they had noticed that the Government troops had bled from their noses, eyes and ears. Mr. Muslim, a veteran commander of the Government, who witnessed similar situations during the Soviet occupation, has remarked that:

> "The Taliban advance in the front line completely surprised me. I then realized that the Taliban must be in possession of some kind of weapons more advanced than we had seen, possessed or known."

Mr. Muslim, the commander, continues:

> "Chemical weapons hadn't crossed my mind until the evening of 26 September during the Taliban's fierce attack on Lata Band. I received a radio transmission that a large number of our men were being lost and even when I commanded the rest to retreat, I heard no reply. I contacted my headquarters. I was ordered to examine the front line. One hour had passed since my initial contact with the front line when I arrived there. Then I saw Commander Saboor, lying dead on the battle ground. I only noticed blood around his nose and ears. Saboor was a close friend of mine. Suddenly, I had a flashback of the Red Army using similar weapons during the jihad. I really wanted to take his body, which had no trace of external injury, back with me. But the intensity of fighting did not give me the chance."

Based on this account, it is the strong conviction of the Islamic State of Afghanistan that the foreign sponsors of the Taliban have provided them with some type of internationally banned gas or chemical weapon which were used in the Taliban onslaught for the capture of Kabul, the capital, where they encountered strong resistance.

We are bringing this tragic episode to the attention of this Assembly and therefore appeal to the international community immediately to assign a team of inquiry to investigate the case to which I have referred.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has continuously provided information to the United Nations Special Mission and to the Security Council about the military acts of the Taliban, which have systematically refused to accept the United Nations peace process.

In a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations dated 5 September 1995 (S/1995/767), the Government of Afghanistan warned the international community about the dangers of the fragmentation and disintegration of Afghanistan and of the possibility of the Taliban military advances getting out of control.

In the letter to the Secretary-General dated 14 September 1995, the Islamic State of Afghanistan forecasted

> "the outcome of this new tension as alarming and perilous"

and earnestly called for the prompt dispatching

> "of a fact-finding mission to western Afghanistan in order to report during the consultations to the Security Council". (S/1995/795, p. 2)

The Secretary-General, in a letter dated 22 September 1995, assured that,

> "The United Nations remains committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and opposed to all external interference in your country. I am using the mandates entrusted to me by the Member States to do all I can to resolve the sources of conflict which contribute to instability in Afghanistan. I shall continue to pursue a comprehensive approach to the overall peace process, in which the Special Mission will continue to play the main United Nations role. I ask that you continue to cooperate with it."

In a letter dated 27 September 1995 to the Secretary-General, the Islamic State of Afghanistan stated that,

> "Taliban not only undermined peace and tranquillity in the western parts of the country, but in the meantime, posed an external practical menace to the territorial integrity of Afghanistan." *(S/1995/823, annex, p. 3)*

and that,

> "the most reasonable and practical way to peace, and appropriate atmosphere for a peaceful transfer of power to an elected authority enjoying the confidence of the people, is first and foremost the need to ease off the present 'crisis of confidence'". *(ibid.)*

In the general debate of 4 October 1995, we declared that attempts by

> "reactionary groups to destabilize a moderate Islamic system which believes in democracy and human rights, are wrong in their assessments and calculations. Such foreign circles may think that after the usurpation of power by the Taliban all will go well for them. In fact, they will add a further problem, especially by bringing onto the scene a faction which has no factual presence on Afghanistan's political scene. These circles should be aware that the peace and security in the capital, the actual relative peace and stability in the country

> and in the region, would be jeopardized by such an erroneous miscalculation. The same error was made by the former Soviet Union in 1979." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 19th meeting, p. 10)*

As far as the activities of the United Nations Special Mission are concerned, we suggested, in a letter dated 30 September 1995, that the efforts of the Secretary-General

> "and those of Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, would benefit from the establishment of a contact group on Afghanistan composed of States, but not the ones immediately involved, as well as of interested organizations." *(A/50/510, annex, p. 2)*

In a letter dated 12 October 1995, we warned that,

> "The different leaders of the Taliban have several times declared their rejection of the United Nations Special Mission's action in proposing to them to accept a ceasefire. They have also rejected the proposals for peace talks with other parties to the conflict." *(S/1995/866, annex, p. 2)*

In a letter dated 12 November 1995, we informed the Secretary-General that,

> "On 11 November 1995, the Taliban launched as many as 170 rockets on the civilian-populated sectors of Kabul, as a result of which 37 innocent lives were lost and more than 52 civilians wounded, while immense damage was inflicted upon public property." *(A/50/748, annex, p. 2)*

This is why in a letter dated 16 November 1995 (A/50/760) addressed to the Secretary General, the Islamic State of Afghanistan inquired about the identity of the Taliban, their ideology and goals, their rejection of the peace process and their negative attitude towards the United Nations.

As a result of the heavy bombardment of the capital by the Taliban on 26 November 1995, the Secretary-General expressed his concern about the escalation of fighting and called upon all parties to cooperate with the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission, then headed by Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, aimed at achieving an immediate ceasefire and promoting negotiations among the parties on a transitional mechanism for the transfer of power, to achieve a just and durable settlement acceptable to all Afghans.

During 1996 Afghanistan continued to keep the United Nations well informed about the atrocities committed by the Taliban in a letter dated 19 January 1996 (S/1996/44).

On 9 April 1996 the Security Council held two meetings on Afghanistan. During the meetings the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan provided adequate information on the role of the so-called Taliban in causing turmoil in Afghanistan and threatening the peace and stability of the region. This was recognized by the Security Council in a statement to the press on 13 December 1995.

In a letter dated 22 August 1996 addressed to the Secretary General, the President of the Security Council stated that the members of Security Council,

> "express their strong view that the warring parties should renounce the use of force and settle their differences by peaceful means, through negotiations.
>
> "The members of the Security Council are convinced that the main responsibility for finding a political solution to the conflict lies with the parties and that all States must refrain from interference." *(S/1996/683, first and second paragraphs)*

The Taliban have consistently taken a rejectionist attitude and still act against the letter and the spirit of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and decisions.

Given this account, I must say that this is the time to look back and see who is responsible for the ongoing human tragedy in Afghanistan. Was it not the lack of any appropriate response by this Organization to the intransigent attitude of the Taliban that encouraged and enabled them to see the tunnel wide open and to pursue their designs crafted by military-industrial magnates from abroad?

The Islamic State of Afghanistan had continuously warned the United Nations about the possible outcome. Who is to blame, and could we consider it a conspiracy of indifference or a conspiracy of victimization? Regardless of which one it may be, the blood of Afghans has been spilled. One thing manifested by the indifference thus far is that Afghan blood is not cheap; rather, it is worthless.

Let us go back to the drastic events that took place during the last couple of weeks. The Government forces evacuated the capital in order to prevent a bloodbath. The Taliban invaded Kabul on the morning of 27 September 1996. The Government authorities relocated their headquarters and offices in Taloqan, the capital of the northern province of Takhar.

Resistance against the Taliban is not limited only to the Panjshir Valley, where the Taliban are conducting widespread and extensive battles, targeting civilian areas. In many other parts of Afghanistan, under the rule of the Taliban, there exists the potential for resistance. Soon we will hear about uprisings.

In today's circumstances, the objectives of the Islamic State of Afghanistan have not changed, and I would like to emphasize once again our firm commitment to General Assembly resolution 50/88 on Afghanistan, which was adopted by consensus on 19 December 1995.

The provisional setback of one party in the conflict and the territorial gain of one side could not mean that peace would prevail in the country. Military occupation cannot bring about conflict resolution. On the contrary, the escalation of tension once again necessitates a negotiated settlement of the conflict through the mechanism formulated in operative paragraph 4 of resolution 50/88 B of 19 December 1995. This provides a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan through the United Nations peace process.

A ranking United Nations official expressed his concern by stating in *The Los Angeles Times* of 5 October 1996,

> "It's frightening [that] this is going to be the Government, because these men have obviously had no experience but fighting."

The Taliban, who have invaded the capital city of Kabul with cross-border military assistance, will not be able to ensure the national unity of Afghanistan, especially in the light of what they have done during the first days of their military rule in the capital. The Taliban, in spite of being Pashtuns, neither agree with the majority of Pashtuns of the country nor with Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Baluchis, Nooristanis and others.

The Afghan leaders, intellectuals and scholars cannot agree with the regressive and backward views of the Taliban. Many religious leaders of the country do not approve of their attitude and deem it incompatible with the needs of Muslims in the modern world. They all consider them unacceptable tools of foreign intervention.

The military rule of the Taliban must not be considered final or accomplished. Those foreign quarters which have provided financial and military assistance to the Taliban will not be able to subsidize and finance their rule permanently.

The Taliban are lacking any vision or ability for the objective of economic and social rehabilitation in Afghanistan. They lack any coherent and systematic thinking or projection of the vast needs of today's Afghanistan. Many of their leaders consider the teachings of modern science and technology contrary to religion. They consider science to be sacrilege. The Taliban, who still believe the earth is flat, are not the people for Afghanistan, not when we are about to enter the twenty-first century.

Yet the outside sponsors of the Taliban are attempting to cover up their actual identity and nature, thus soliciting a kind of legitimacy for this illegitimate, obscurantist and terrorist group. Any relation established with the Taliban may be interpreted by the Taliban as tolerance by the international community. Allowing this to happen would be an affront to the principles of the United Nations, a seal of approval for terrorism, a legitimization of foreign intervention and, indeed, an insult to the human conscience.

In the name of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the victimized Afghan nation, I express gratitude to all those countries that have expressed their concern and disapproval of the occupation of the Afghan capital, Kabul, by the Taliban, and the rule of terror in that city.

Days after the occupation of Kabul, on 2 October 1996, the Coordination Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at which I had the honour to speak, convened at the United Nations in New York. In a final communiqué, they expressed

> "the hope that the Afghan parties will peacefully resolve their political differences and collectively

> work for the restoration of peace and stability in the country".

The practical solution to the Afghan problem needs to include the following elements, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 50/88 B of 19 December 1995 on the question of Afghanistan: first, an immediate cessation of armed conflict and the declaration of a ceasefire; secondly, an invitation to all Afghan parties to the negotiating table, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the cooperation of the OIC; thirdly, an agreement on the composition and establishment of a transitional Government of national unity and the creation of a credible, authoritative body to which power would immediately be transferred; and, fourthly, the consolidation of the political process in order to ascertain the views of the people and solve the problem through elections or through the convening of the traditional Grand Assembly.

Our basic views and main objectives are as follows: the re-establishment of peace and stability, along with the creation of conditions conducive to ensuring that the peoples of Afghanistan can live, in an atmosphere of law and order, on the basis of democratic values and respect for human rights, as required by an authentic and truthful vision of high Islamic principles; and the establishment of a strong central Government on the basis of agreement among all Afghan sides that have the capacity to mobilize masses and are able to secure the achievement of these goals. This will allow Afghanistan to become once again a positive factor for peace and stability in the region to which it belongs.

Only a transitional Government of national unity would be able to secure the national unity of the country and to allow the launching of the major task of reconstructing and rehabilitating Afghanistan. Such a goal could not be achieved without the full participation of the intellectuals, scientists, experts and technocrats of Afghanistan, many of whom now live abroad. We are expecting all countries that are in favour of peace and stability in Afghanistan to assist our people in order to achieve these noble objectives.

Upon adopting the Charter of the United Nations 51 years ago in the city of San Francisco, the founding fathers of this global establishment declared the United Nations to be based on the sovereign equality of all States. They did this at a time when this principle was an ideal. The struggle for freedom by many nations, together with millions of sacrifices, on the one hand, and the need in the twentieth century for natural interdependence between the members of this global family, on the other, proved more than ever the righteousness of this principle.

It is apropos in this connection to quote His Excellency Mr. Hervé de Charette, the Foreign Minister of France, who on 25 September stated from this rostrum:

> "If we are not careful, we are going to be living in a world without criteria, without values, without references, in which some — the strongest and richest — will be in a position to decide alone on the future of the planet." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 8th meeting, p. 18)*

The President: I now call on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, His Excellency The Honourable Eriya Kategaya.

Mr. Kategaya (Uganda): It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address this Assembly. From this lofty rostrum, the nations of the world speak to one another as members of one global community, irrespective of size and differences. The United Nations is today the best hope for a better future for humankind. What we do here must therefore contribute positively and effectively towards the achievement of the noble purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of our Organization.

Permit me, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Uganda, to express how pleased we are at your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Your well-deserved election is a great honour to your country, Malaysia, with which Uganda enjoys very cordial bilateral relations. I wish to pledge our full support to you, Sir, and to affirm our confidence in your ability to guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the able manner in which he presided over the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I salute our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his commitment and dedication to the global mission of the United Nations during the past five years.

The United Nations continues to be confronted with the challenge of redressing the development disparities that exist among nations, particularly between the few rich countries and the majority of impoverished ones. For the latter, these disparities are manifest in widespread poverty and the degradation of their ecosystems. They are also a major cause of the spiral of violence and internal conflicts, with their attendant suffering and destruction.

In an increasingly interdependent world, these problems have regional as well as global consequences. It would therefore be wishful thinking to treat them as if they were a concern of only the affected countries and regions. They must be addressed through global approaches and strategies that ensure lasting solutions.

We note that present advances in transport, communications and information technology have resulted in the increasing globalization of the world economy. Both liberalization and globalization offer opportunities as well as challenges within and among nations. These twin phenomena have, in addition, deepened the marginalization of some regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This process could breed further polarization within countries, with very destructive and destabilizing consequences. We wish to underscore the continuing relevance of multilateralism and international cooperation as prerequisites for equitable global growth and development and for addressing the negative consequences of globalization.

The increasing trend towards unfair trading practices and conflicts in international trade is a matter of serious concern for us. We are witnessing situations in which developing countries are pushed to open up their markets, ostensibly to advance free trade and competition, while at the same time developed countries practice managed trade and limit access to some export products from developing countries. This contradiction is unhealthy for the world economy.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994 as an entity to act as a custodian and guarantor of a rules-based multilateral trading system is a positive development. We therefore welcome the convening of the first Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Singapore in December 1996. The Meeting should, in our opinion, give a clear policy direction to the WTO for the next two years on measures to redress imbalances existing in the present multilateral trading system, which are to the disadvantage of many developing countries, particularly the least developed ones.

The Meeting should therefore give high priority to undertaking a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements, with a view to adopting specific and concrete measures to obviate adverse effects to the least developed countries and net food-importing developing countries arising from the implementation of the agreements; reverse the marginalization of the least developed countries; and strengthen their capacity to compete in the global economy. These measures must include long-term financial and technical support, the transfer of technology as critical elements for the effective implementation of the Uruguay agreements and in the improvement of the trade performance of developing countries.

With regard to the proposal that the Meeting address issues outside the WTO built-in agenda, we would prefer to benefit first from the analytical advice of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on the policy implications of such issues to international trade before they are taken up by the WTO. In our view, the Meeting should focus on issues relating to the full implementation of agreed commitments, such as the provision of financial, technical and technological support to developing countries, as well as those aimed at stemming and reversing the distortive factors to trade.

The increasing role of transnational corporations in the international trade in goods and services and in the flow of private capital has inordinately enhanced their control over resources and the transfer of technology and know-how in developing countries. In some cases, this control is beyond the capacity of many developing countries to check. As the influence of these corporations grows with globalization, there is an urgent need to elaborate and adopt an effective and legally-binding international code of conduct to regulate the activities and influence of transnational corporations.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are committed to subregional and regional cooperation and integration. Within the East African subregion, we have participated actively in the revival of East African cooperation, in the strengthening of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and in intensifying efforts to make operational the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. It is our belief that enhanced subregional and regional cooperation and integration are critical to complement South-South cooperation and international cooperation for development. It is also a means of enhancing competitiveness and thereby improving our performance in the world economy. In efforts to further strengthen cooperation in East Africa, we propose the establishment of a cooperation arrangement between the East African Community and the United Nations. We appeal to the international community to support these efforts.

The magnitude of debt and its servicing obligations continues to impose a serious obstacle to our development efforts. As of March 1996, for example, Uganda's total external indebtedness stood at $3.2 billion — which represented 67.5 per cent of its gross domestic product — of which 75 per cent was owed to multilateral financial institutions. Debt-servicing was $141 million, or 27 per cent of export earnings. Projected debt-servicing for the 1996-1997 fiscal year is $184 million, or 35.8 per cent of export earnings. This precarious situation is compounded by the current rigorous debt-repayment enforcement regime pursued by creditor multilateral financial institutions.

Uganda is committed to fulfilling its debt obligations within the means available to it. In this regard, a multilateral debt fund has been established to offset the debt owed to the International Development Association, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank's African Development Fund. We are grateful to all bilateral donors who have continued to support and make direct contributions to the fund. We also appeal to other donors to join in this worthy endeavour in order to augment the resources of the fund, which are still very low.

To complement these efforts, we make a special appeal to the international community, and particularly to the multilateral financial institutions, to adopt concrete measures to effect a drastic reduction of external indebtedness of least developed countries and other severely indebted developing countries. In this regard, we commend as a first step the debt relief initiatives currently in place, such as the Naples Terms. In our view, however, these measures remain grossly inadequate to have any meaningful impact. There is therefore a need to augment them with additional measures that substantially reduce all types of debts, including those which entail debt write-offs or converting part or all of our debt into grants.

We note with appreciation the recent measures by the Bretton Woods institutions to put in place measures for debt relief. We urge the dominant shareholders to support these measures.

African countries, including Uganda, continue to be adversely affected by record-low levels of export commodity earnings. The situation is aggravated by tariff and non-tariff barriers imposed by our trading partners on our semi-processed and processed export products and by declining terms of trade due to increased prices of imported manufactured goods and services. We urge the adoption of concrete support measures to improve our export earnings. This could include assistance in the areas of horizontal and vertical diversification of our economies, as well as capacity-building.

Today is World Habitat Day. It is a day for the international community to reflect on and reaffirm its commitment to the plight of the one billion people in all parts of the world who lack adequate shelter and basic services, such as safe water supplies and sanitation facilities. It is also a day to dedicate ourselves to the objective of finding lasting solutions to the problems of homelessness and other social ills associated with rapid urbanization.

The maintenance of international peace and security remains a formidable challenge for the United Nations. Efforts in this regard continue to be undermined by conflicts and tensions arising from inadequate political leadership that cannot correctly handle ethnic, religious and social differences in those affected areas. These have undermined the rule of law, peace and security, and have contributed to untold suffering in many of the affected countries.

In Africa, civil strife and internal conflicts, with their attendant consequences, are afflicting several countries to varying degrees. For instance, we are gravely concerned by the suffering imposed on the people of northern Uganda by renegade groups. These terrorist acts must be stopped forthwith for the sake of peace and security in our subregion.

The conflict in Burundi is a serious threat to the peace and security of that country as well as to the subregion. Uganda appeals to all the parties concerned to accept the mediation efforts of former President Julius Nyerere, which are aimed at achieving a peaceful political solution to the conflict through compromise and accommodation in the context of the Arusha initiative and peace process.

In this regard, Uganda urges all the parties concerned to resume, as a matter of urgency, unconditional political negotiations in order to establish peace and security for all Burundians. We are committed to working closely with other countries in the subregion to find a lasting political solution to the problems of Burundi through dialogue and national reconciliation.

The steps taken by the Government of Rwanda towards the restoration of normalcy and achieving national reconciliation are steps in the right direction. These steps should be encouraged and supported, as they provide a basis for restoring mutual confidence and trust, which are critical for a peaceful return and reintegration of Rwandese refugees from neighbouring countries.

We are concerned about the chaotic situation in Somalia and call for the reinvigoration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) peace efforts.

Common sense must prevail among the warring factions in Liberia so that the people of that unhappy country may be given a chance to enjoy peace, security and national reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States in this connection.

With regard to Angola, we note that the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol is under way. We encourage both parties to stay the course.

The efforts of the OAU and the Yamoussoukrou mediation efforts of President Bédié of Côte d'Ivoire to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict in Sierra Leone should be encouraged.

Uganda supports the just struggle of the Sahraoui people for self-determination. To this end, we urge the speedy resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Uganda supports the efforts of the United Nations and the appropriate regional organizations to diffuse conflicts through preventive diplomacy, as well as through the mechanisms of peacekeeping and peacemaking, including dialogue and confidence-building. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, as well as for its Central Organ. The Mechanism and the Central Organ should be supported and provided with the necessary resources to enable them to operate effectively.

The idea of encouraging African Member States to put in place contingent arrangements for deployment in situations requiring peacekeeping or military observer missions in Africa has merit and deserves support. At the same time, humanitarian programmes with built-in mechanisms that address the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation, recovery and long-term development are essential to restoring lasting peace.

We welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to seize this opportunity to commit themselves to adopting concrete time- frames for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, as well as to stopping the qualitative development and refinement of nuclear arsenals, including through computer simulation.

Most African countries have embraced and are vigorously pursuing far-reaching political and economic reforms. In Uganda, we have implemented fundamental economic reforms consistent with our development priorities and strategies and the structural adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions. We have liberalized trade and created the necessary conditions for encouraging and promoting both domestic and foreign direct investment. We have improved our economic management systems, with strong emphasis on fiscal and monetary discipline. We have endeavoured to integrate and implement the outcome of the major international conferences into our national development plans and priorities.

However, in order to nurture these positive developments and improve the well-being of our citizens, we need concerted cooperation and support from the international community by ensuring, among others, a favourable external economic environment.

I am glad to state that Uganda is a nation restored both politically and economically. Allow me to outline briefly the measures that have been taken and which are responsible for peace, security and the other positive changes that prevail in Uganda today. These positive changes are the result of a policy of reconciliation. For us, reconciliation itself is a means to an end, the end being national unity.

In pursuance of this objective, we instituted from the very beginning the principle of a broad-based Government which accommodated all shades of political opinion and ideologies. The pillar of the democratization process is the nationwide political participation in decision-making at all levels, which has empowered people to take charge of their own governance.

Uganda remains committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. A Human Rights Commission has been established to oversee the observance of human rights in Uganda. The Commission is complemented by a national human rights unit in the Ministry of Justice and similar units will be established in the near future at the district level. We have ensured that the promotion of human rights includes a component to redress the inequality of opportunities through affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged groups such as women, youths and the disabled.

In this regard, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides for special representation in Parliament for these groups. We appreciate the support extended to us so far in this area and welcome further technical and financial support, especially towards the review and finalization of appropriate legislation and the strengthening of relevant human rights entities at various levels.

Last year, a new Constitution was promulgated after more than a year of intense debate by a Constituent Assembly of directly-elected members. On 9 May 1996, the first-ever free and fair presidential elections were held, followed by parliamentary elections on 27 June 1996. Today, Uganda has its first-ever directly-elected President since independence in 1962.

In Uganda, we share the view that decentralization is a necessary condition for good governance and empowerment because democracy cannot thrive unless space is given for civil society to operate. In pursuance of this, political decentralization is not only enshrined in the Constitution, but is already being implemented. Such a transfer of power to the districts and other lower tiers has removed the remoteness of government and ensured a speedier delivery of goods and services to the people.

Years of war and economic mismanagement have left Uganda with a shattered economy. The present administration has continued to make steady progress in restoring the economy under the framework of the Economic Reform Programme. Inflation has been successfully controlled since June 1992 at the level of 5.6 per cent, on average. At the same time, Uganda has enjoyed a high average rate of economic growth of 8.1 per cent due to macroeconomic stability and strict monetary policies.

Ms. Bostwick (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In order to attract investments, an Investment Code was instituted to ensure a friendly and conducive investment environment. The Uganda Investment Authority was established as a one-stop centre for information.

Uganda commends various initiatives taken by the United Nations to eradicate poverty. Special mention should be made of the World Social Summit, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. We commend this spirit of international partnership aimed at addressing persistent poverty in our region. For its part, the Government of Uganda has embarked on the long road of addressing the problem by ensuring that the fruits of economic growth reach the masses of the population. Among the strategies in place is an Action Plan for the Eradication of Poverty with a Poverty Task Force as its implementing agency. In the short and medium terms, the Action Plan focuses on increasing household income, primary education and road infrastructure. The political and economic achievements registered so far prove that a serious, visionary and committed Government can lead donor conditionalities rather than be led by them.

We have just concluded the mid-term review of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. For the satisfactory outcome of the meeting, we wish to thank most profoundly the Government of Japan and all delegations which participated actively in this exercise. One of the fundamental conclusions of the review is that a lot remains to be done to consolidate the modest political and socio-economic progress that has been achieved in some parts of the African continent. This will require the mobilization of substantial new and additional resources and, in particular, the provision of a conducive external economic environment. The review also demonstrated that a partnership based on shared responsibility and mutuality of interest is possible and inevitable.

The United Nations remains a custodian of many cherished ideals, such as the primacy of democratic governance. The United Nations was born out of a yearning for a democratic multilateral system capable of addressing problems brought about by hideous tensions and conflicts throughout the world, with a view to making planet Earth a more secure, just and friendly place for present and future generations. We all agree on the need to strengthen the United Nations so that it can carry out its global mandate effectively. We should therefore provide it with adequate resources. This commitment, invariably, calls upon each Member State to meet its financial obligations to the organization in full, on time and without conditions.

Within the context of strengthening the Organization, measures should be adopted to achieve its democratization at all levels. Since there is a worldwide trend towards democratization, this Organization cannot remain unaffected by these winds of change. Uganda therefore supports proposals to restructure the Security Council in order to bring transparency to its working methods, democracy to its decision-making procedures and equity to reflect the increased membership of the United Nations.

The United Nations remains, in our view, the appropriate central forum for addressing global problems confronting the international community. It must be strengthened, revitalized and democratized. This is the challenge that we the peoples of the United Nations must address as a matter of priority.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency The Honourable Alpian R. O. Allen.

Mr. Allen (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Last year, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations with much fanfare and glowing tributes. The organs of this body were dissected and properly examined and the findings were encouraging. The prevailing opinion is that the strengths of this institution far outweigh its weaknesses. However, we cannot be complacent. As our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Sir James Mitchell, said when he addressed the fiftieth session:

> "Living institutions, like anything biological, need the nurture of fresh nutrients, fresh ideas. A living thing either improves or perishes." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 49)*

Mr. Razali has assumed the presidency after the period of stock-taking and at a time when we look with renewed confidence towards the United Nations. His passion for innovation will serve him well. As he presides over this re-energized body, I wish to congratulate him on his election to the presidency. Let me take this opportunity to extend to his predecessor our best wishes and deep appreciation for the competent manner in which he presided over the last historic session.

As the twenty-first century approaches, we must ask ourselves the following questions: What of the future? Will our children survive? Will we be at peace with our fellow men?

The picture looks bleak. We are still plagued by persistent poverty, disease, hunger, environmental degradation and spiritual pollution, wanton acts of terrorism, the drug menace, domestic disturbances and regional conflicts.

There is still hope so long as we see each other as friends and neighbours rather than as competitors. If we pool our resources for the enhancement of mankind, the world will be a much better place.

We have witnessed over the past year a trail of terrorist destruction and death. In our view, all terrorists are cowards who rely on fear and destabilization to achieve their sinister ends. What triumph can there be in the murder and disfiguring of innocent people? This is obviously the product of sick minds. These faceless criminals who perform these acts, sometimes with the tacit approval of authority, have no place in the community of nations.

My delegation is calling for another conference to deal with the root causes of terrorism. Such a conference must involve this entire body so that the views of small and mighty nations on the matter can be expressed. As the new century approaches, our children must be able to play in public parks without having to look over their shoulders. When we travel, we must be able to view the passengers next to us as new-found friends rather than potential executioners.

Why do we continue to stockpile weapons of mass destruction? The aim of these weapons is to kill. Killing human beings should not be regarded as a sport. Life will always be man's most treasured possession. In our peaceful region, we are strangers to the world of such deadly arsenals and will continue to denounce their use. We are delighted to be associated with the passage of the Australian resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Any step, however small, towards the curbing of the arms race and the eventual elimination of weapons must be viewed as positive.

One of the most formidable challenges of our time is the protection of the environment. The threats which confront us are daunting; global warming, desertification and deforestation are among the many. Environmental protection is the key to our survival. Mankind is faced with a choice: either save the environment or perish.

The suffering in Burundi, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Bosnia cannot go unnoticed. The international community can do much more to help the dispossessed and the hungry of these troubled lands. After all, should we not be our brother's keeper?

I come from a small but proud country. Our people believe in industry and hard work. The banana industry is the mainstay of our economy. But our very existence is under serious threat from forces larger and more powerful than ourselves. I speak not in anger, only in pain and helplessness. How else can we feel when those who have the capacity to help us seek our destruction? If the forces of indifference and greed were to succeed, our society would be thrown out of gear and the democracy which we so cherish will go up in flames.

Our entire population has been sensitized to our banana woes and the people have vented their frustration by writing thousands of letters to those who may hold the key to our survival. We wish to thank all those who have come to our assistance, be they in Europe or elsewhere, and we sincerely hope that they will continue to lend a helping hand.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is deeply concerned about the use of illegal drugs and drug trafficking. The magnitude of this problem transcends national boundaries and calls for increased cooperation on a multilateral level. The influence of the drug barons runs very deep. Sometimes they take on the characteristics of power elites. We firmly believe that renewed international efforts can go a long way towards the eradication of this menace, which contaminates both body and mind.

While we welcome the recent elections in Bosnia, we are troubled by developments in the Persian Gulf. We sincerely hope that the situation will normalize itself as soon as possible, since an escalation of the crisis would be of benefit to no one.

The Middle East is another area of concern. We hope that the recent peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organization will bear fruit. Much has been achieved over the past two decades and it is expected that the next century will bring peace to the troubled people of these ancient lands.

I now turn my attention to the vexing question of the resumed participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations. This founding member of the United Nations has been excluded from this body for a quarter of a century. How does one reconcile this with the principles of parallel representation of States and of universality? It is time for the Republic of China on Taiwan to be readmitted to this body. In our view, the country not only possesses the attributes of nationhood, but it is well endowed to contribute to the development of Member States of this body. Its economic success is a model for developing countries. The country has also made democratic strides. I wish through this forum to congratulate the Republic of China on Taiwan on the holding of its first direct presidential election. It is really a triumph of the democratic process. All States have not embraced this process.

Despite the adoption and entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are shocked by the incidence of gross violations of the fundamental rights of the child. Sexual abuse, prostitution and child labour are but a few of the problems that dehumanize our children. My delegation joins in the call for measures to be taken, not only for the universal ratification of the Convention, but also for the effective implementation of this instrument.

There has been much discussion about the reform of the Security Council. Brilliant ideas have been put forward from all quarters. Our own view is that the Security Council must be restructured to reflect an equitable geographic distribution. After all, big Powers do not have a monopoly on knowledge or truth. And in this body, all nations should be treated as equals.

History has saddled the United Nations with a heavy burden of responsibility and, as we look towards the twenty-first century, we must seize every opportunity to achieve the goals and ideals enshrined in the Charter. There is a great deal to be done in the area of social and economic development, but we can do it once we have the political will and the unity of purpose.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of Works, Communication and Information of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Ebrima Ceesay.

Mr. Ceesay (Gambia): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail wholeheartedly on his assumption of the presidency of this session. His close association with the United Nations during these years as his country's representative makes him not only highly qualified for the office but also fully cognizant of the activities, including the needs and challenges, of this, our great Organization. I would assure him of my delegation's support at all times.

In the same vein, I should like to extend appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the work of the Assembly was both effective and successful. My delegation's thanks and gratitude also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the successful holding of this session in the face of serious financial and other constraints, and for the selfless service he is rendering to our Organization. The quality of his work, as well as his untiring efforts to revitalize our 50-year-old Organization, deserve our full and collective support and encouragement. The Gambia remains committed to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) declaration of support for His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to continue in office as Secretary-General for a second term.

Last year, when the delegation of the Gambia addressed the Assembly, we dwelt at length on the twin democratization and development processes in the Gambia. It is fitting today to report on the progress made so far and the successes achieved. Concerning the democratization process, I am pleased to inform this gathering that we successfully conducted a referendum on 8 August 1996 to adopt a new Constitution, and we elected a new President on 26 September 1996. These two activities have been characterized by a high sense of political maturity and civic interest and a high level of voter turnout.

The Constitution was adopted by a vote of 270,093 in favour against 113,744 opposed, with a total turnout of 86.9 per cent for the referendum. Not only is this new Constitution the best we have ever had, but it also embraces the people's political expectations for the advent of a true sense of justice and fair play as well as their deep love of freedom, respect for human rights, and a strong nationalistic feeling predicated on a desire to associate with the rest of the world on a free and equitable basis. Furthermore, the new Constitution ensures that the Second Republic will progress and flourish under the universally respected principles of transparency, accountability and probity — a *sine qua non* for any honest and well-meaning Government. The presidential election, the penultimate phase of our two-year transitional programme, was held on 26 September 1996. Four political parties presented candidates, and His Excellency Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, leader of the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), emerged as the winner. The President-elect polled 220,011 votes, or about 56 per cent of the total votes cast. This resounding victory indicates a strong endorsement by the Gambian people of the policies of the now-dissolved Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). The distribution of the results and the actual percentages of the votes captured by the respective candidates depict an election that was free and fair — free from the obvious abuses of the position of incumbency.

In keeping with the APRC's philosophy of national unity, the President-elect has extended a message of peace and reconciliation to all Gambians. In his address to the nation on 27 September 1996, following the presidential election, he said:

> "In democratic elections no voters lose, since the outcome is the collective will of all."

He invited all Gambians, irrespective of political conviction or affiliation, to come together and work for the development of the country. In concluding the democratization process, the Gambia will hold its National Assembly elections on 11 December 1996. Both the Government and the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission attach a great deal of importance to these elections and have therefore been encouraging interested parties and individuals to contest for seats in the National Assembly. We have no doubt that the peace and orderliness that characterized the referendum and presidential election will prevail in the forthcoming elections.

It is noteworthy that the electoral process in the Gambia has been complemented by the Government's priority development projects. During the last two years, the Government demonstrated to the whole world that an important ingredient of national development is the commitment and honesty of a Government in implementing realistic programmes for the benefit of its people. In the education sector, several primary, junior and secondary schools were built and a university extension programme launched. In the area of communication, the country's first-ever television station was commissioned, and the international airport was expanded and modernized. Generally, there has been significant improvement and expansion of the country's road network to ease the chronic transportation problems. In the health sector, the Government has built a third referral hospital, and more doctors and nurses have been recruited from inside and outside the country. As regards the agricultural sector, mechanization has received greater attention as a step towards achieving food self-sufficiency. In short, more has been achieved in all sectors of the economy during the two years of AFPRC rule than during the 30 years of the previous regime.

The resilience of the Gambian economy during the last two years — in spite of the unjustified sanctions imposed on the Gambia by our development partners for purely political reasons, and in the face of other powerful external shocks deriving mainly from trends in the global economy and in world trade — has been reassuring. The Government's macroeconomic policies and development efforts have helped to create an enabling environment for private investment, including foreign direct investment. In effect, the country's economic and financial performance during the 1995-96 year showed real gross domestic product growing by 3 per cent. The projections for 1996-97 are for it to grow by 3.5 per cent, with inflation limited to 5 per cent.

As we forge ahead, we in the Gambia are proud of our Government and its laudable achievements since it took over the reins of power on 22 July 1994. We have learned the true meaning of democracy: an amicable partnership between people and Government. It is through such a partnership that the Civic Education Programme was successful and that Vision 2020 — a national strategy for socio-economic development, aimed at raising the standard of living of the Gambian population — was launched.

I should like at this stage to express the sincere gratitude of the Government and people of the Gambia for the support and assistance received from some members of the international community during the critical period of the transition programme. We fervently hope that this support from our friends and well-wishers will continue to enable us successfully to conduct the National Assembly Elections on 11 December 1996. With the successful end of the two-year transition programme and the peaceful return of our country to democratic civilian rule, we also expect that the international community will now join us in our pursuit to achieve sustainable development.

The recently concluded United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul will go down in history as one of the most successful international conferences organized by the United Nations. The Habitat Agenda, adopted by the Conference, reflects generally the acute shortage of shelter and the growing international concern for more and better shelter. Adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlement development in an urbanizing world remain basic human needs and a universal concern. In fact, the statement by the Secretary-General of Habitat II, Mr. Wally N'Dow, that

> "Istanbul will be the gateway to development into the next century",

will hold true well into the twenty-first century. The commitment of the Government of the Gambia to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda — including the Global Plan of Action and, in particular, the forging of sustainable partnerships with all actors in the field of human settlements — remains high.

The mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s in September 1996 provided an opportunity to review progress in Africa's development. The review reaffirmed the New Agenda as a fundamental and achievable programme for the socio-economic development of Africa, if both Africa and its development partners adhere to the programme's stated responsibilities and commitments. The review revealed the gradual but encouraging growth of the African economy, with an increased gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.3 per cent in 1995, as compared to 2.1 per cent in 1994. The implementation of the New Agenda, however, continues to be constrained by failure to achieve the United Nations target of devoting 0.7 per cent of the GDP of developed countries, including 0.15 per cent of their GNP, for overseas development assistance to the least developed countries.

Africa's huge external debt burden, which grew at an average annual rate of 1.5 per cent between 1990 and 1995, remains the single most serious constraint to Africa's consistent economic recovery and sustainable development. Major donors, creditors and the international community should collectively devise a multilateral debt-relief programme aimed at completely writing off the debt of developing countries by the turn of the century. The implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa alongside the New Agenda, and in collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions and other agencies, will constitute a new and dynamic global approach of working with Africa to accelerate its development. The attainment of the objectives of the Special Initiative within a decade will depend to a large extent on the availability of new and additional funds, rather than on the reprioritizing of programmes and remarshalling of funds identified under the New Agenda. Only in this way can the international community realize — as the President of the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn, said in connection with the launching of the Special Initiative — that

> "there is a need for us to give the push, that help, the assistance which can keep the momentum".

Globalization continues to hold much attraction, but its benefits continue to elude the majority of developing countries. The impact of globalization and liberalization on employment and sustainable socio-economic development in general has been negative. The recent Ninth Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in South Africa, while reaffirming the international community's commitment to partnership for development, recognized the disparities among nations as well as the need to help developing countries reap the benefits of globalization and development and to ensure their full and effective participation in the world economy on an equitable basis.

The case of the least developed countries has always received the attention and support of the international community, particularly through the adoption of the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. The mid-term global review of this Programme of Action, held in September 1995, failed to confirm the realization of the programme's primary objective, which is to arrest and reverse the deterioration in the socio-economic situation in the least developed countries and to revitalize their growth and development. It is noted that the lack of progress in improving the socio-economic performance of LDCs is attributable, in the main, to the failure of the international community to provide the necessary support and assistance through official development assistance, debt relief and benefits from globalization and liberalization. The success of the Programme of Action during the second half of its existence will depend to a large measure on the amount of international support for the economic growth of least developed countries.

The attainment of international peace and security remains a vital aspect of our Organization's work. It is for these reasons that my delegation joins the international community in supporting the United Nations effort to ensure peace and the resolution of conflicts throughout the world. In this regard, the set-back in the peace process evidenced by the upheaval of April 1996 in Liberia was of great concern to the international community. However, thanks to the ceaseless efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), especially through its Committee of Nine on Liberia, the peace process is back on track, and so far there has been satisfactory progress on its implementation. In spite of the difficulties encountered over the past few years in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, it is still our firm belief that the Agreement remains the best framework for restoring durable peace to Liberia. With the genuine commitment and goodwill of all parties and the continued support of the international community, especially the United Nations, I am confident that a lasting solution will soon be found.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina gives some hope that the brokered peace will continue to hold. The elections of 14 September 1996 and the new federal Government which has been created should hopefully lead to national unity and reconciliation.

It is sad to note that the civil war in Somalia, after simmering down for some time, has suddenly flared up again. The renewed fighting has put a great deal of strain on the peace process. The efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of the international community in general to contain hostilities and restore peace, security and stability continue to receive our fullest support.

The dramatic deterioration of the situation in Burundi is a major source of concern for all peace-loving people the world over. We are indeed saddened by the spate of ethnic killings in this country, which continue to claim many innocent lives. It is our collective responsibility to put an end to this sorry state of affairs and thus avert a replay of the tragic events that occurred in neighbouring Rwanda some two years ago. In this regard, we continue closely to monitor the evolution of the political situation in Burundi and hope that peace, security and order will be permanently restored. We therefore strongly support the OAU peace initiatives, in particular the Mwanza peace process and the Arusha peace initiative, aimed at guaranteeing security and democracy for all people in Burundi.

The peace dividend so far achieved in our search for a lasting peace in the Middle East should not be allowed to fade away. Rather, we should continue to pursue the peace process in order to achieve a lasting peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The quest for peace is a universal concern of the international community. At the same time, the desire for equality and recognition continues to elude some nations. The Republic of China on Taiwan's quest for recognition and readmission into the United Nations has failed to have the necessary impact on the attitude and goodwill of the international community. Today, the Republic of China on Taiwan stands very high in the international arena in the field of economic growth and social development. It is noted not only for its economic achievements, but also for its exemplary political reform. The direct election of its President on 23 March 1996, an event unprecedented in Chinese history, marked the culmination of Taiwan's political democratization. This accomplishment ought to be recognized by the United Nations, in accordance also with the principle of universality. My country believes that the precedent of parallel United Nations membership, which applied to the former East Germany and West Germany and currently applies to North Korea and South Korea, should be applied in the case of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Besides the membership factor, which is in accordance with Article 4 of the United Nations Charter, there is a justice factor relating to Articles 1 and 2 of the same Charter. It is regrettable that this factor was not included in our debate when the matter was considered at the meeting of the General Committee of the General Assembly, held on 18 September 1996, in connection with the item on the draft agenda entitled "Consideration of the exceptional situation of the inability, resulting from General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI), of the 21.3 million people on Taiwan, Republic of China, to participate in the activities of the United Nations". As we all know, one can quantify numbers of signatures, but not emotions — that is, sympathy with and an interest and belief in the justification and rightness of the case of Taiwan. It is our conviction that the parallel participation of the two sides of the Taiwan strait in the United Nations and other international organizations would be conducive to the maintenance of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world in general. Let us therefore give the Republic of China on Taiwan the opportunity to share with us their capabilities and experience in a collective effort to realize humankind's hope for the equitable development of every region of the world.

The practice of the unilateral imposition of an economic embargo against one Member State by another Member State should have ceased with the end of the cold-war era. For more than three decades now, Cuba has struggled, against all odds, to survive economically and financially. With patience and determination, Cuba has continued to make great strides towards socio-economic development. Indeed, among the family of nations, it has excelled in some activities of common benefit to humankind, such as genetic engineering and modern medicine. These laudable achievements and progress made by Cuba deserve to be encouraged.

The application of the principles of international law and the effort of the international community to propagate peace and security should be all-embracing. In this connection, as regards Libya's alleged complicity in the downing over Lockerbie, Scotland, of Pan Am flight 103, we support the OAU resolution adopted by the sixty-fourth session of the Council of Ministers in Yaoundé from 1 to 5 July 1996, as a basis for overcoming the present impasse on the issue.

Concerning the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, we would like to urge the international community not to relent in its efforts to find a just and peaceful settlement to the dispute in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The Gambia reaffirms its commitment to the international community's resolve to combat naked aggression, particularly between States, and international terrorism from whatever quarter. Pursuant to the relevant Security Council and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) resolutions, we support the efforts of Kuwait to preserve and defend its territorial integrity while seeking a just and speedy redress to the consequences of the Iraqi invasion.

Last year we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The occasion afforded us the opportunity to review the operations and mandate of the Organization. The ongoing exercise of strengthening the United Nations system is complementing this review and the rededication to the ideals of the United Nations. In particular, we should give our full support to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and to the reform of the Security Council — including the question of equitable representation of all geographical regions on this important organ of the United Nations. The proposals for the reform of the Security Council made by the African Group and Italy, among others, should also be given due consideration. The reform of the Security Council should ensure that the hegemonistic interests of a few will not be promoted to the detriment of the majority.

The reforms of the United Nations put in sharp focus the present financial crisis of the Organization and the gallant efforts of the Secretary-General to improve its financial situation. The serious consideration the General Assembly has given this matter since 1994, leading to its setting up a High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations, once more demonstrates Member States' commitment to the preservation and continued operations of the Organization. The cumulative effect of the financial reforms, including the huge staff reductions, should, as much as possible, neither compromise the efficiency and productivity of the Organization nor deflect it from its traditional operations and renewed mandate. The Organization's precarious financial situation is our collective concern, and we should therefore resolutely strive to ensure that it is promptly addressed. This of course requires that all Member States have the clear political will to pay their contributions punctually. Member countries should desist from withholding their contributions for purely political considerations, as this would paralyse the functioning of the United Nations.

It is fitting at this juncture to refer to the work of this body in pursuing the objectives of the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. The search for a common basis for international cooperation on conflict resolution, relief operations and development remains an active agenda of the United Nations. The success of any international cooperation on these issues would require greater focus on the effective implementation of the development priorities of developing countries. The link between peace and development is not only essential but forms part of the United Nations Charter. The two serve as twin pillars of the international community's effort to achieve universal peace and security based on the promotion of the social and economic development of all peoples. We remain fully committed to their effective realization.

The manifold problems of illicit drug trafficking and abuse are becoming increasingly universal. In many respects, both producer and non-producer nations are rapidly falling victim to the pernicious effects of illicit drugs. Today countries that once were drug free are either gradually becoming infested with the sale and use of illicit drugs or are being made transit posts in the illicit trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances. For many years now, the United Nations has led a steady, all-embracing fight against the global drug menace, especially through its International Drug Control Programme and Global Programme of Action, and, recently, by making drugs the subject of the 1996 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council session. The effort of the United Nations in combating the trafficking and sale of illicit drugs cannot succeed unless the international community lends it its full support through improved and effective international cooperation in drug control. The Gambia will continue to participate in any international effort to combat and defuse the global drug menace. At the national level, appropriate organs and control measures have been put in place to discourage the use of the Gambia as a transit post in the illicit global drug trade and to save Gambians from falling victim to its harmful effects.

In the area of nuclear disarmament, it is gratifying to note that the General Assembly recently adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That endorsement by the international community should not, however, overlook the legitimate concerns and reservations expressed by India.

The convening of the World Food Summit next month in Rome to address hunger and food security provides the opportunity to renew the international community's commitment to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition and the attainment of food security for all.

The linkage between the problem of food security and poverty cannot be overemphasized. The Gambia, within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme and in observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996), has been participating effectively in the fight against poverty. National programmes have been designed and put in place to achieve poverty eradication.

The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed some landmark activities in international cooperation. The series of United Nations global conferences signifies the international community's preoccupation with the preservation of international peace and security, the promotion and preservation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the propagation of development techniques and the attainment of sustainable development, the provision of adequate shelter for our rapidly growing population and, indeed, the attempt to ensure the social and economic well-being of all peoples all over the world.

The Gambia is proud to be associated with this international crusade for a secure and better life for every human being.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, on whom I now call.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): It is with profound pleasure that I salute the President, a diplomat of experience and stature and one worthy to preside over the functions of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish to recall that it was his country and mine that brought the question of Antarctica to the United Nations, and our countries have worked closely together for a number of years. We have made progress as countries from various parts of the world have joined us in an effort to preserve Antarctica as the last natural heritage of mankind. His country's efforts in regard to the betterment of the global community are deeply admired by my countrymen, and it is with a sense of genuine cordiality that we refer to Malaysia as a friendly and brotherly country. Permit me also to extend sincere thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who so ably led the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

On 7 July of this year Hurricane Bertha passed perilously close to Antigua and Barbuda, and our twin-island State sustained some damage. Small island developing States like ours are subject to various natural disasters — earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hurricanes. In 1974, we experienced an earthquake that measured 7.8 on the Richter scale and caused considerable destruction. A volcano on the island of Montserrat, some 50 kilometres from our shores, has been active for the past 15 months. Our people live in constant fear of fall-out and tidal waves from a major eruption.

The natural phenomenon presently plaguing Montserrat could be a prelude to a disaster that can destroy small islands globally. Evidence of the warming of the planet has clearly emerged, and extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense. Last year, Hurricane Luis unleashed its fury on our country for 48 hours and was declared to have been the worst storm of the century. Hurricane Marilyn followed in its wake, intensifying the damage. Indeed, we remain grateful to the countries and institutions that provided various forms of assistance to help in the reconstruction.

In addressing the General Assembly of the Organization of American States this year, our envoy noted that development is not sustainable if a score of storms and hurricanes are to trample through our region each year. Carbon dioxide emissions caused by the burning of petroleum, coal, wood and gas since the start of the Industrial Revolution in western Europe 200 years ago have begun to place the survival of small islands in jeopardy. Harmful production, wasteful consumption and dangerous disposal patterns continue to characterize the behaviour of the largest industrialized States. We must therefore reduce carbon dioxide emissions to the agreed Toronto targets. Together, let us address the challenge so that we may bequeath to future generations a better and a safer world than we inherited. Our demise will only signal the beginning of the end of a marvellous civilization, more creative and more inventive than any that has gone before.

Between 1 and 15 July Antigua and Barbuda played its part at the human settlement Conference, Habitat II, at Istanbul, and we urge that the Istanbul Declaration and Plan of Action be adhered to. It must be recognized that it is in the cities and towns of the new urban world, where most of us will ultimately live and work, that most economic activity will take place and goods be produced. It is where most pollution will be generated and national resources consumed, with an impact felt far beyond city limits. Moreover, it will be in the cities and towns of this urban world that growing social tensions and conflict, rooted in poverty and the maldistribution of resources, will be resolved, and where the key to true human security will be found.

The problems of urbanization are not limited to the more endowed countries. We too, despite our small size, have to cope with the varying patterns and outcomes that demand responses that have at times threatened to overwhelm us. Nevertheless, I am happy to report that in Antigua and Barbuda we have made considerable progress towards control and adequate regulation.

Under the guidance of the Development Control Authority and the Central Housing and Planning Authority major initiatives have been undertaken, with assistance from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the United Nations Development Programme. The Government, in partnership with other sectors of society, is playing a multiple role in improving living and working conditions on an equitable basis to enable all its citizens to enjoy adequate shelter, affordable basic services and sustainable human settlements.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda not only performs the functions of a national policy-maker and housing administrator, but also serves in the capacity of lender and developer. In those roles, it has ensured that interest rates are kept at reasonable levels and that repayment periods for loans are as long as 20 years. In its regulatory role, the Government of the Labour Party has put forward development standards, stipulated building procedures and integrated land and shelter policies with programmes for reducing poverty and assuring employment, for environmental protection, for improvement in education and health, and for providing clean water and sanitation facilities.

This is indeed a strange and puzzling world. With reference to sustainable development, a myth has gathered momentum that maintains that the developing world is making significant forward strides. World Bank data, however, demonstrate that over 60 per cent of the countries in which the United Nations and other bodies have development assistance operations have witnessed declines in real per capita income over the decade ending in 1994.

James Gustave Speth, the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, in a forceful and moving presentation at the opening of the 1996 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, noted two major ironies of the current situation. He declared that now that the world is freed from distorting effects on development cooperation, just when the development assistance community has learned so much more about how to succeed and do its job well, just when the needs of the developing world are growing rapidly and dramatically — just at this precise time, the resources that are needed for development cooperation are shrinking rapidly and dramatically. In the past four years, real development assistance has declined by 20 to 25 per cent.

The other irony is that just when there is a better understanding of the essential links between peace and development cooperation, just when the United Nations is called upon to assume much greater responsibilities in the follow-up to conferences and in post-conflict peace-building and other areas, just when the United Nations is reforming and strengthening itself to do these things, the Organization finds itself threatened by a financial crisis that afflicts both its assessed and its voluntary contributions. Indeed, Speth sees the above as not only ironies, but as tragedies of our era.

This, the major international Organization, is restructuring itself and endeavouring to undertake meaningful reform. While it may be true that the existing financial crisis is primarily a crisis of payment, there is no denying the fact that there is unnecessary waste being generated here, whether in regard to the duplication of work detail, the excessive copying of documents, the scheduling of numerous meetings destined to accomplish nothing or to a myriad of other undesirables. Financial concerns are not, however, the only issue of which the world body is seized. Reform is being undertaken in a multi-pronged manner, which in itself will be a long process that can be justified in a Benthamite way by emphasizing the greatest good for the greatest number.

At present, even though the discussions have been considered to have made progress, there is not even the glimmer of a discernible outcome in regard to the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Although consensus exists on expanding the Council, the manner in which that can be achieved equitably remains to be resolved. Antigua and Barbuda is firm in its declared position that any expansion should include developing countries and that both the African and the Latin American and Caribbean Groups should be represented. Similarly, Antigua and Barbuda would like to see certain restrictions placed on the use of the veto. We understand that all efforts at restructuring and reform in the United Nations, however, should be focused on economic growth and development.

In this whole process of misunderstandings, the regional commissions are being placed under attack through cut-backs and in some instances calls for their dissolution. This is particularly hard on those of us who are being served by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). We see ECLAC as a regional organization that has already reformed itself and should not be penalized by calls for further reforms. ECLAC has rendered valuable service through subprogrammes on economic development, social development, international trade, development financing and transport, industrial, agricultural, and technological modernization, environment, natural resources and human settlements, statistics and economic projections, the integration of women into development, regional integration and cooperation, economic and social planning and population. In all of these fields, ECLAC collaborates with the Governments of the Americas in the investigation and analysis of public policy, provides technical assistance and training, and promotes regional cooperation.

For those of us in the Caribbean it is imperative that ECLAC be fully sustained to continue to assist us in these and other areas. This is set against the backdrop of the pressures that are being brought to bear on the Caribbean region, which Prime Minister Lester Bird described at the meeting of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on 6 July. He spoke of the right-wing voices that are ready to impose upon the States of the Caribbean Community a new colonialism under a variety of guises, such as those of limited sovereignty and extraterritoriality. Indeed, the very economic survival of some Caribbean States is threatened as a result of pressures brought against countries whose sustenance depends almost entirely upon the production of a yellow fruit.

Most of the countries affected by the banana dispute are former European colonies, and the continuation of their historic access to European markets is crucial to their economic survival. Without some form of protection, the banana industry in the CARICOM States would collapse, leading to severe social dislocation that would ultimately manifest itself in political catastrophe.

Recognizing the significance of banana production to some of our economies, the European Union has a programme in which a small portion of its market is reserved for Caribbean producers, a portion that is less than 10 per cent. This has certainly not been a major problem for the big companies, for a handful of multinational concerns still controls 60 per cent of the European market and 70 per cent of the overall market. However, it appears that Bob Herbert, in an editorial of 13 May, was correct when he asserted:

> "for the multinationals, enough is never enough". (*The New York Times, 13 May 1996, Section A, p. 15*)

Indeed, for countries where literacy rates are in the ninetieth percentile and where political prisoners are unheard of, it would be disastrous if the economies of their societies were to be destroyed through the destruction of the banana industry.

The bleakness of the aforementioned situation is, however, offset by the ideas expressed at the Tokyo Conference on Development Strategy in March of this year, where it was posited that there is the will to sustain a new global partnership and make it effective. There was consensus that the issues that stretched beyond mathematical economics, that is, issues such as those incorporating poverty, the environment, the advancement of women and food security, had to be tackled at both the national and international levels.

It was nonetheless brought out that many developed countries are experiencing harsh financial difficulties that are imposing severe limits on their capacity to contribute to the international organizations. Thus, the nations of the world had first to respond to the challenge of poverty by striving for its eradication. Secondly, the key to success clearly lies in nations working together to build and implement a development strategy to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Thirdly, in the process of working out and implementing a new development strategy, it is crucially important to reinvigorate the roles of the international organizations, and in particular that of the United Nations.

Of significant concern to developing countries was the statement that in efforts to secure sufficient resources it is important to take steps in other policy areas such as trade or technological transfer. In addition, the globalization of the world economy makes it important to promote the development of human resources and the capacity for institution-building in developing countries. In its Human Development Report 1996, the United Nations Development Programme acknowledged that, although some countries are experiencing unprecedented economic growth, the quality of human development does not always reflect that progress. While many countries of the developing world are struggling with the implications of trade liberalization and globalization, individuals within these societies are faced with a complementary struggle. The sad fact is that as long as selective liberalization between countries remains, individuals within countries will find it more difficult to escape the downward spiral into the depths of poverty. It hardly takes a stretch of the imagination to recognize, therefore, that an early investment in building human capacity is incumbent upon any society wishing to achieve economic and social development that is both equitable and sustainable.

While it can truly be said that the 1990s signalled the end of the cold war and witnessed the dissolution of a bipolar world, the conflicts we are witnessing today are localized and appear to be gathering momentum as a result of ethnic, religious and civil considerations. There is clearly an upsurge of micronationalism, which fosters separatist considerations. There is much social disruption, mass starvation and the spread of contagious diseases. Of an extremely frightening nature is the fact that access to victims is often rendered difficult or impossible. There is clearly a deepening lack of security for relief personnel and supplies. Clearly, there is a need for the demobilization of paramilitary groups, for demining and for an intensification of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

It must be recalled that the United Nations came into existence to ensure peace among nations. With that in mind, we should be prepared to take steps beyond a Non-Proliferation Treaty and a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and move towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction within a time-bound framework.

Responses to the myriad of desperate problems have to be interdisciplinary in nature, for there is no single United Nations agency that can control, pacify, and rehabilitate effectively.

Recognizing the dangers of increased international criminal activity in the region, Antigua and Barbuda is working with its neighbours and expects to receive additional assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources to initiate a national drug and money-laundering control policy. Priorities of the policy include legislative and regulatory reform, increased interdiction activities, technical training, preventive health and public education and training. Given its multidimensional nature, the drug problem is one that the United Nations system is particularly well equipped to address.

However, working alone, the Organization is helpless to tackle this scourge that cuts across all sectors of society, impacting on families, health and economic activity. There needs to be greater coordination among nations if the blight of narcotics is to be tackled in a meaningful way. Strong and determined efforts within certain countries will be seriously undermined if there is not a united global approach to manifestations and practices that will destroy not only the fabric of our societies but the lives of countless individuals.

The plague of terrorism must be controlled. The appeals of two South Asian nations to have an international convention against terrorism must be heeded. Often, terrorism is linked to narcotics. Not only do the States of the eastern Caribbean have fears of subversion, they are also concerned by the intense violations of ports and harbours and the corresponding graft as their countries serve as transit points.

In concluding, I would like to say that as the representatives of the global community we have to live up to the trust placed in us by our constituencies. Multilateralism must be paramount as we strive toward ways and means for better management of our planet. We must agree on common values for common survival. Our constituents are calling for an end to senseless violence and for the re-emergence of concepts of compassion and equity. They are asking for our dialogue to be creative and forward-looking.

The peoples of different regions must be prepared to make sacrifices and to suppress the barriers that divide — barriers such as hatred, selfishness and bitterness. Let us not forget the words of Philip Vundla, an executive of the African National Congress, who said:

> "What you achieve by violence, you will need greater violence to maintain. Those who say the answer is bloodshed have other people's blood in mind, not their own."

However, the fundamental need in regard to advancement remains that of economic reality. Michel Camdessus of the International Monetary Fund reminded the leaders of the G-7 countries on 24 June that:

> "Too many refusals to grant development assistance have the alibi that such funds are wasted. This slippage, as well as the so-called donor fatigue, must be vigorously combated if the international community wishes to be in a position to keep the poorest countries from marginalization and to steer the world away from the tensions and crises that extreme poverty cannot but engender whenever it occurs. Marginalization is not inevitable, and every country has its opportunity in this globalized world."

My country recognizes the fact that we are in an era of unprecedented change and opportunity, a period in which scientific developments and technological achievements seem almost miraculous and offer an improved quality of life. The United Nations should become embedded in reality and push the critical issues involving destitution and social injustice to the centre of both national and public debate.

Antigua and Barbuda takes pride in and cherishes the United Nations and we believe that it has been judged, unjustly, more by its failures than by its successes. But the work done in regard to health, human rights, peacekeeping activities, disaster mitigation and assistance to developing countries presents an enviable record.

The United Nations has the capacity for achievements in areas beyond the reach of national or regional authorities. Subsequently, the nations that comprise this body must redouble their collective commitment to translating vision into reality. In this way, we will thrust the United Nations manfully forward into the dawning twenty-first century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kebede (Ethiopia): It was not my delegation's intention to speak at this juncture. My delegation regrets that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan referred in his policy statement to an issue of which the Security Council is seized and with regard to which the Council has adopted successive resolutions, which, regrettably, the Government of Sudan continues to defy today.

The points to which the Foreign Minister of Sudan attempted specifically to draw the Assembly's attention are part and parcel of the public relations exercise pursued by Sudan. That exercise is not relevant, nor do the facts lend credibility to what he attempted to portray.

In its relations with all its neighbours, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia pursues a policy of good-neighbourliness based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. In light of those cardinal principles, the Government of Ethiopia has taken several practical measures it feels can play a pivotal role in fostering all-round cooperation in the region. However, this constructive policy has been frustrated and our political commitment to working for a better future has been misused by the Sudanese authorities for their own purposes.

The Sudanese Government abused the prerogative of a sovereign State by issuing Sudanese passports, both diplomatic and regular, to help non-Sudanese terrorists travel freely to Ethiopia. It used its national carrier to transport terrorists. It made and continues to make financial resources and sanctuary available to terrorists and provided the very weapon used to commit the cowardly act.

The fact that the Sudanese authorities were involved in the failed attempt on the life of the Egyptian President on 26 June 1995 in Addis Ababa and that they continue to obstruct justice by sheltering the terrorists wanted in connection with the assassination attempt is as clear as day and does not require illustration at this stage.This has been clearly recognized in all relevant decisions of the Organization of African Unity and in the three resolutions of the Security Council adopted on the matter.

The assertion that evidence and information relating to the suspects was not provided to the authorities of the Sudan is devoid of truth. The Sudanese Government was provided with pertinent facts and evidence, including names, nationalities and known addresses of the terrorists. The claim of the Government of the Sudan that it has tried to locate the three culprits has no credibility. Sudanese authorities were aware of the location of the three before, during and after the assassination attempt, as well as when extradition requests from Ethiopia were received.

The evidence gleaned from those apprehended and the material evidence attest beyond the shadow of a doubt not only to the involvement of the Sudanese authorities, but also to the fact that they provided shelter and sanctuary to the three terrorists sought in connection with the assassination attempt.

Regarding the trials of the three suspects in Ethiopia, it should be pointed out that it is quite common for domestic legislation, including constitutions, to provide for circumstances under which trials may be held *in camera*. Moreover, under international law it is permissible to exclude the public and the press from all or any part of a trial for reasons of national security, public order or morals, when the interests of the personal lives of the parties so require or, in the court's view, where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice. The decision of the Ethiopian court, which is fully in conformity with article 20 of the Ethiopian Constitution, to hold the trial of the three defendants *in camera* is also fully consistent with the standards of international law. In light of the foregoing, my delegation finds outrageous and unacceptable the reference made in the Sudanese statement to the trial of the three terrorists convicted for the crime they committed.

Lastly, we call upon the Government of the Sudan to cease its sponsorship of international terrorism and return to the fold of responsible and law-abiding nations. We also call on the Sudan to hand over the three suspects to Ethiopia and to show its determination and commitment to work for genuine regional economic and political cooperation that could ensure a better future for the peoples of the entire region.

Mr. Eltinay (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The statement by the Minister for External Relations of Sudan before the General Assembly this morning called for cooperation and solidarity. He denounced armed conflict among States and called for non-interference in the internal affairs of States and support for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation wishes to respond to the remarks made this afternoon. We did not intend to do so, but the erroneous statements by the representatives of Ethiopia and Eritrea oblige us to do so.

The remarks by the representative of Eritrea take us back to the cold-war era. I would like to ask the representative of Eritrea a question: When did Eritrea achieve its independence? How can he explain his claim that Sudan began its aggressive policy vis-à-vis Eritrea as far back as 1989, when everyone knows that Sudan has provided unlimited support to the Eritrean people for more than 30 years. Indeed, support was given to the current Government in Eritrea for the holding of the referendum on Eritrea's self-determination, which in turn led to its independence in 1993. We provide such assistance to the fraternal people of Eritrea without any expectation of return. This is a brother's duty.

As for the attempts to raise the issue of the refugees to which the Sudan has acted as host for more than 30 years, I would add that, in the interim, some of them have obtained Sudanese nationality. They have shared bread and salt with the Sudanese people and have joined in all aspects of Sudanese society. I do not need to recall here that Eritrea, which refused the return of Eritreans to their homeland after independence on the pretext that it lacked the necessary infrastructure to absorb them — a refusal of which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is fully aware — cannot admit here that it limits the return of refugees solely to members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, to the exception of all others. That is a flagrant breach of all norms and rules governing refugees.

The international community has adopted clear rules governing international relations. Any act outside such rules is a breach of international norms and standards. On 10 May 1996, the Eritrean Head of State announced to the international community and media, including the BBC and *The Economist*, his intention to provide unconditional and unlimited armed support to the Sudanese opposition in order to overthrow the Government of the Sudan.

How does the Assembly regard a State that turns over a neighbouring country's embassy to that neighbour's armed opposition? Is this the behaviour of civilized States or is it, rather, behaviour that threatens international peace and security? I would merely recall the information provided to the Security Council by the Sudan with regard to the dispatch of Eritrean forces to attack Sudanese civilians. Killings took place, properties were destroyed and bridges were blown up in the very same area that was, for more than 17 years, a haven for the present leaders of Eritrea.

Now, we have renewed claims against the Sudan. The sole aim of statements made by Eritrea in both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, notwithstanding Sudan's unlimited support for Eritrea, is to bite the hand that once fed it. Sudan's efforts to normalize relations between the two countries represent the only element of stability in the region. The aggression against Sudan is a dead end that can serve the interests of neither people, nor those of other peoples in the region.

As for the comments made by the representative of Ethiopia, I should like to state before the Assembly that my country's relations with Ethiopia prior to the regrettable attempt on the life of the Egyptian President, which was condemned by Sudan along with all the world's States, were normal and excellent. Even 30 days or more after the assassination attempt, relations remained normal. Then we were surprised by a dramatic transformation in Ethiopia's position and its accusations against Sudan. Ethiopia has claimed that such accusations were made by the culprits in their custody, who were then tried *in camera* while the Security Council itself rejected the allegations of the three so-called culprits.

I think we have the right to wonder: Does Sudan, accused of terrorism by people held in custody, not have the right to confront its accusers or to obtain the text of such confessions? Or is the international community not entitled to obtain such texts, given the Security Council's imposition of sanctions against the Sudan on the basis ofthe same allegations? Such questions, I believe, are legitimate ones.

The statement of my Foreign Minister did not exceed the bounds of legitimacy in any way. We believe that the remarks of the representative of Ethiopia with regard to strong evidence against the Sudan to be unfounded. The Security Council never heard one iota of proof of Ethiopia's allegations or their veracity.

The other question I should like to raise with the representative of Ethiopia is the following: Is the fact that Sudan has provided and continues to provide every support to Ethiopia, including the prevention of any act of aggression against it from inside Sudanese territory, not sufficient to ensure Ethiopia's cooperation or at the least the provision of information requested by Sudan regarding the alleged culprits now in Ethiopia, not to mention the OAU request for such information?

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that agenda item 15 (b) entitled, "Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council", will be taken up on Thursday, 31 October, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.26

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

26th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail .... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Djibouti, Mr. Roble Olhaye, on whom I now call.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): My delegation offers its warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at what will certainly be a crucial session. We have come to know you over the years, and have never failed to admire and appreciate your relentless activism, plain-speaking and valuable contributions. We have no doubt that your unique experience, coupled with your keen awareness of the issues on which we will have to deliberate, augur well for a most productive session.

We also wish to record our gratitude to Mr. Freitas do Amaral, the outgoing President, for his direction and focused leadership during the historic fiftieth anniversary session. Much of the pace and progress in United Nations reform efforts and activities this year are largely due to his commitment to achieving a meaningful and balanced outcome on this difficult issue.

We would also like to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the perseverance and dedication with which he has undertaken his duties. Saddled as it is with diminishing resources and increasing uncertainty regarding its role and mandate, the United Nations is going through trying times. The Secretary-General, however, has, against all odds, maintained the continuity and functioning of the Secretariat, tackling the daily challenges facing mankind.

My delegation, in conformity with the decision and recommendation of the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, supports the re-election bid of the Secretary-General for another term in order to enable him to accomplish the objectives of his mission.

Fifty years ago, with great energy, grand vision and a considerable measure of optimism, the world embarked upon a high-minded journey to end the scourge of war, eliminate poverty and create a world of freedom and justice for all. Much has been accomplished, and it cannot be denied that humankind now has the power and resources to achieve the goals we set ourselves.

Yet too many dreams remain shattered, too much potential remains unfulfilled, and too many conflicts remain in too many parts of the globe. The United Nations is bracing itself for more turbulent times ahead, with bankruptcy on the horizon as it confronts the threat to either "reform or perish". Remarkably, there is a placid air of "business as usual" pervading this session of the General Assembly — a dream state in which all is well and normal. Given the dire predicament threatening the existence of this Organization, does this reveal a measure of resignation? Is this the beginning of the end of the

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

enthusiastic hope for a new world order with which this decade began? Does this explain why so many opportunities to address the pressing problems of our day have not been realized? While politically the world might be in a state of flux and transition, economically, however, it has enjoyed an unprecedented level of output — enough for every man, woman and child on this planet to enjoy a happy and secure life.

The vast majority of the people of the world, however, have received minimal benefit. The facts are foreboding. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) informs us that over the last decade income levels in some 70 developing countries were lower than in the 1960s or 1970s. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme tellingly reminds us that the belief that the developing world is doing very much better is one of the great myths of the present. In fact, three fifths of the world's population live in poverty, millions are forced to migrate every year, and 15 per cent suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition. All this is taking place while world food production and reserves are declining in the face of population growth. As most of us realize, much of this stagnation is taking place in Africa.

For all the oft-cited reasons — historical, colonial or contemporary — Africa has been lagging behind on the march to self-sustaining growth. Consequently, 50 per cent of its peoples live in poverty, with a quality of life that is not expected to improve during this decade. While the increasing flow of negative statistics on Africa tends to mask the substantial efforts for reform, pluralization and structural adjustment that are taking place in many countries on the continent, for most people the situation is life-threatening.

There are, however, a few hopeful signs that the extent of Africa's predicament has begun to draw the critical attention it needs from the international community. In particular, the 10-year United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched in March by the Secretary-General, deserves a special mention. Although it does not represent new funding so much as the more efficient use of available resources, it should prove useful.

Together with this initiative, the formal endorsement last week by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, during their annual meeting in Washington, of a plan to substantially reduce the debt burden of the world's poorest and most heavily indebted nations, most of which are in Africa, is very encouraging. If current economic reform measures are to have the desired impact, debt relief is crucial, particularly in reversing Africa's increasing marginalization.

But problems of degradation, poverty and underdevelopment are hardly unique to Africa; they are found in every corner of the world, and must be seriously addressed if we are to rectify the frightening pace of global polarization, both within and between countries. According to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, we are creating a planet that, increasingly, is not one world but two.

For all these reasons, the World Food Summit in Rome next month, and the designation of the decade 1997-2006 as the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty will provide the international community with an opportunity to renew its commitment realistically to face those twin scourges of humankind. The conventional wisdom of today argues that the basic remedy for underdevelopment lies in embracing free and open market economies, stimulated by private capital. To this end, the bulk of the world is engaged in restructuring to fit this mould. But with the dramatic shrinkage of the resources needed for transitional development — particularly those for official development assistance — self-sufficiency has become an almost impossible task. Compounding this dilemma, total private investment has quadrupled since 1990, but only in ways that bypass most developing countries and fail to address their problems.

The world remains laden with conflicts. It has been said that as many as 25 complex emergencies now threaten tens of millions of people worldwide every year, that the convulsions are becoming larger, with wider repercussions, and that this new generation of crises will continue until their underlying causes are properly addressed. Cold-war identities have lost relevance, and old identities and animosities have resurfaced. Many nation States have lost considerable cohesion and are being buffeted by external pressures and strains within. The consequent void of economic and political instability has provided an opening for many unscrupulous, self-proclaimed "leaders" who, hungry for power, are reigniting the myths, latent prejudices, hatreds and fears lying in the dark recesses of so many minds. Employing violence, propaganda and intimidation, such as we have seen in Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia and elsewhere, they have successfully pitted peoples against peoples. The predictable result has been an explosion in the number of armed conflicts, accompanied by widespread devastation, both human and physical, gross violations of human rights, and "ethnic cleansing". This is a situation increasingly in need of concerted international action and a strong, focused and impartial United Nations.

The United Nations has, indeed, responded positively in many instances. Cambodia and Mozambique are cases in point. Some crises, however, have proved intractable, invariably because of the nature of mandates or the political will of Member States, whose changing views and policies have affected the prospects for early resolution. Had the international community acted with dispatch in crisis situations, countless lives could have been saved and scarce resources conserved by forcing the belligerents to disarm unconditionally and to respect the rule of law.

The widespread and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines in many conflict situations has been consistently devastating. We therefore welcome the Security Council statement of 30 August 1996 indicating the high priority being given to demining. The effectiveness of peacekeeping will be greatly enhanced by making demining an integral part of it. Sadly, however, these commendable measures will continue to fall short of what is required unless the international community imposes a moratorium, if not a total ban, on the manufacture and deployment of such devices. In the same vein, we hope that the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will provide an impetus to increased international cooperation, in addition to marking a first viable step towards the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

The problems, conflicts and challenges of development and international cooperation are growing in complexity. Not surprisingly, therefore, as so many have noted, the United Nations system needs to be renewed and enabled to respond to these simultaneous challenges.

Over the past two years, and particularly in the first half of this year, a number of High-level Open-ended Working Groups of the General Assembly have extensively explored and deliberated on issues of reform as they impinge upon the financial situation, the enlargement, composition and transparency of the Security Council, and the Secretariat and General Assembly. Considerable time, energy and resources have been expended in these efforts. However, differences persist among nations, reflecting divergent national policies, views and interests.

As might be expected, a proliferation of ideas and positions is emerging from individual countries, including, to name just a few, the United States, Italy, Belize and Malaysia, which have produced proposals and statements of position. Regional groups, including those in Africa, and alliances and coalitions, including the Non-Aligned Movement, have their own positions. All of them are jockeying for position so as to advance and strengthen their individual or collective interests. The stalemate over Security Council reform is far from over and remains the toughest problem. The real stumbling block is the number and composition of the new permanent membership, which must include developing countries from all parts of the world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America. We must also recognize that constructive participation in the Council by many smaller States has demonstrated that the possession of large economies and large populations cannot be the exclusive criteria for permanent membership.

The tense circumstances persisting in a number of States in the Great Lakes region of Africa is a cause of concern to my country. This is true of Rwanda, where bloated prisons, camps swollen with refugees and the slow pace of the judicial process are just a few of the problems that continue to plague that country. The International Tribunal for Rwanda has begun to function, but with limited manpower and financial resources. The Tribunal must be seen to function effectively, as the message it sends is crucial to resolving the Rwandan problem.

In neighbouring Burundi, the international community remains haunted by the fear of a re-enactment of the horrors that took place in Rwanda over two years ago, where tens of thousands were massacred. There has already been a frightful human toll in Burundi since the army murdered the first democratically elected President in 1993, marking the advent of instability and violence. Should the army — the de facto head of State and supreme authority since 1993 — remain unprepared to accept the authority of a democratically elected civilian government, we may have a recipe for uncontrolled bloodshed. That is the real problem confronting the international community in resolving the Burundi debacle. Djibouti fully supports the efforts of the countries in the region in imposing sanctions, whose objective is to compel the new regime in Bujumbura to restore constitutional order and legality and to hand over power to a legitimately elected government.

With the explosion of violence in the territories occupied by Israel, we have witnessed an alarming deterioration in prospects for peace in the Middle East. The Israeli act of opening a tunnel under one of Islam's holiest shrines, the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem, was yet another example of disrespect for, as well as defiance of, international opinion. But more importantly, it was yet another example of intransigent rule over East Jerusalem.

It is difficult to deny that the ultimate Israeli aim is to change the ground rules — in effect, unilaterally to redefine the peace process, thereby rolling back the clock and reversing years of hard work, concessions, sacrifice and good faith on the part of the previous Israeli Government, the Palestinians, the Arabs, and the international community. It is also disturbing that, while the world is watching, Israel should decide openly to pursue a policy of creating "facts on the ground" in total disregard of the principles established in Oslo, the Washington peace agreement and United Nations resolutions, all of which emphasize the return of occupied land in exchange for peace. It is little wonder that the current talks between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat, which began last week in Washington, have neither produced nor resolved anything. What we see instead are Israeli promises or commitments to keep talking to the Palestinians. But there has been neither an action nor a promise to implement what had already been agreed upon, or even to contemplate the start of final status negotiations.

The depth of Arab disillusionment is obvious. The hard line policies pursued by the new Government are simply fuelling fires of hatred and violence. Djibouti hopes that reason will prevail, and calls on key countries and regions to continue providing the necessary direction, leadership and reassurances for a return to previous commitments. Having come so far and sacrificed so much, and with so much at stake, we must not allow the peace process to drift or wither away. In this context, we also wish to underscore the urgent call of the Arab Summit in Cairo in June for Israel to resume the peace process within the framework of the Madrid Conference, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

We share the anxiety in the Gulf region about the state of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates that have been occupied by Iran, and we hope that this long-standing problem will be resolved peacefully.

Somalia continues to exist in a cycle of misery and political impasse, lacking structures, an economy, a stable civil society or legitimate authority. More disturbing, there is neither peace nor war, and clashes continue unabated. Mogadishu and its infamous warlords remain the maelstrom of Somalia. Despite almost five years of incessant fighting, there are no signs of compromise or reconciliation. The lust for power of a few has resulted in disaster for the whole country, whose condition is now a virtual replica of what it was in the nineteenth century. There is simply nowhere to lay the blame for Somalia's wretched state except on the warlords and their inability to reason and reach agreement. This myopic vision of leadership seems unlikely to change until one faction prevails, and that may take years. Meanwhile, the people suffer, and the world is watching. Somalia, we must conclude, remains a festering tragedy, a piece of unfinished business for the international community, an international embarrassment, and a permanent problem. It will not go away simply because we refuse to address it, and it will certainly continue to be an indelible blemish on the Charter of the United Nations.

The sooner we consider the far-reaching implications of the situation of this failed State, which is absent from this Hall, the better it will be for the Somali people and the international community. Somalia is simply consumed by an interminable turmoil from which it cannot free itself. It needs help — our help.

With the holding of elections, the saga of Bosnia has reached a decisive juncture. The problem facing the international community is the attempts to obstruct the normalization process through the use of violence and intimidation, which increase the pressure for secession. However, one issue that is creating tremendous frustration and confusion is the reluctance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to apprehend the prime Bosnian Serb war crime suspects — Karadžić and Mladić — who are accused of instigating, planning and ordering the genocide and "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia. To date, 74 arrest warrants have been issued for suspected war criminals, but only eight people are in custody. This fact, perhaps, reflects a political decision; but it is a paradoxical one whose effects may be with us in Bosnia and beyond for a long time.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to an issue relating to my own part of the world. Our corner of the globe, the Horn of Africa, seems to be passing through a period of renewed optimism and revival. This must be sustained. With the regional economy slowly but steadily recovering from the effects of past turmoil, the need for enhanced cooperation cannot be overemphasized. Djibouti is umbilically linked to the pulse of its neighbours and cannot, therefore, be indifferent to their economic and trade realities.

The conflicts and civil strife that have plagued the Horn of Africa in the past two decades have had a devastating effect on our economic and social life. This can be readily observed in the unacceptable number of displaced persons and refugees in my small country, for whom our continued commitment to care is proving to be economically and socially overwhelming, if not disastrous.

Djibouti's approach to regional affairs is based on mutual respect, moderation and cooperation. We believe that all the countries in the Horn of Africa must together seek to resolve the common problems of poverty, conflict and underdevelopment, bilaterally and within the framework of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), whose revitalization is crucial.

Djibouti is in the midst of economic restructuring and institutional reforms. Given the demobilization process that is now under way, we require generous assistance from the international donor community. Towards this end, we are planning to organize a round table early next year, under the aegis of the UNDP and the Bretton Woods institutions, to address these problems and the accumulated effects of regional instability. We have made a valiant effort, and we remain convinced that the donor community will, for its part, work with us in order to surmount our multiple challenges and create a better future for our citizens.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Abdus Samad Azad.

Mr. Azad (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bengali; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, please accept our heartfelt congratulations on the assumption of your high office. Your unanimous election is a tribute to your great country, with which we enjoy friendly and fraternal relations. It is also a testimony to your diplomatic skills and personal standing in this world forum, where, on so many occasions, you have articulated most persuasively the concerns of the international community, particularly those of the marginalized and vulnerable. You are assured of the unstinting support of my delegation in the discharge of your very heavy responsibilities.

I should like to convey to your predecessor, the President of the General Assembly at its historic fiftieth session, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, our appreciation for a job well done.

I should also like to pay a special tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a very real sense, he is the first Secretary-General of the post-cold-war period, and has had to contend with issues and problems that were perhaps furthest from the minds and intentions of the founding fathers of our Organization. To his high office he has brought to bear clarity of vision and purpose, and a remarkable ability — as we have seen from two seminal reports, on the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development — to present complex analyses and facts in a simple, distilled form. For nearly half a decade, he has handled what was once described by one of his predecessors as "the most impossible job on this earth" with verve, dignity and integrity.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Over two decades ago, the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, addressed the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session, soon after Bangladesh's entry into the United Nations as a fully-fledged Member. In his speech he outlined some cardinal tenets, the basic focus and thrust of our foreign policy, and our domestic priorities. These hold good even today, in a world that has undergone radical transformation. As Bangabandhu stated, our foreign policy is based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and friendship towards all.

Our political party, the Awami League, has only recently been returned to office, through the process of general elections, after a gap of more than 20 years. As was stressed by our leader at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only in an environment of peace can our people concentrate their energies and resources in combating the scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment that still beset a large proportion of humankind. We naturally place special importance and emphasis on the development of good-neighbourly relations with the countries of our region, on the basis of universally accepted principles of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We identify wholeheartedly with the aspirations and hopes of developing countries in general, particularly those belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, and share a special affinity with the fraternal member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). We share with our development partners the goal of improving the quality of life of our people, and our relations with them are of the greatest significance to us.

The existence of friendly and good-neighbourly relations does not necessarily preclude the emergence of problems. What these can ensure, however, is that the best of political will, goodwill and good intentions are brought to bear in seeking solutions to any outstanding problems or any new ones that may arise. Such an approach would go a long way towards resolving any differences or disputes.

Our outstanding problem with India over the sharing of the waters of the Ganges River is not unknown to this forum. Water resources play a predominant role in the socio-economic development of a country. For Bangladesh, the availability of fresh river water in adequate volumes is indispensable for purposes of agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, river traffic, maintaining ecological and environmental balance and preventing the intrusion of salinity. The importance that we attach to this issue cannot be overemphasized and we have resumed bilateral discussions with India, in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and trust, to resolve this vexed problem amicably and equitably so that our legitimate concerns can be met.

On the subject of water resources, I should like to digress a little from the purely national and also bilateral context, because the shortage of fresh water resources is not, let me emphasize, unique or peculiar to Bangladesh or our region. Even from the international perspective, it is an issue of primal significance. According to a recent strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources of the Economic and Social Council, by the year 2025, 52 countries with a total population of more than 3 billion people will be water-stressed or face chronic water scarcity. The problem has as much to do with the availability of fresh water in the overall global context as with the fact that such resources, even when available in abundant quantities, may be found in the wrong places or are available at the wrong times. The problem, therefore, is intimately and intricately linked to efficient water management.

The question of water is not new to the global agenda and, since the Mar del Plata Conference in March of 1977, there have been international programmes on water-related issues. It has not, however, in our view, received the priority that it deserves. An international code of conduct for water-sharing was provided for in the Mar del Plata Action Plan and, as the strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources suggests, an international code of water ethics is needed more urgently today than ever before as a guide to help countries in their efforts to reach bilateral and multilateral agreements. The paper also suggests an international convention on freshwater resources along the lines of those that already exist on biodiversity, ozone depletion and climate change. In particular, the paper stresses that the United Nations should develop principles and ethics on sharing the joint planetary freshwater resources. These are ideas that, in our view, warrant serious consideration by the world community.

Reverting to the subject of our Government's priorities, let me just add that, in the domestic sphere, like all other developing countries, we are striving for a human development paradigm that will prioritize people, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors. We will pursue a programme of reforms with emphasis on our domestic considerations: poverty alleviation and economic growth with social justice. The social sectors will receive special attention.

The 1990s has been a period of democratic renewal. Our Government firmly believes that it is as important, and perhaps more difficult, to live up to great principles and ideas as to fight for their realization. That is why we shall strive to strengthen our polity through institutions and laws.

Through constitutional amendment, an important innovation for democratic institutions and practice was effected in Bangladesh, following overwhelming popular demand, prior to our general elections in June. Three months before general elections are to be held, the Government will demit office and hand over power to a non-partisan and neutral caretaker Government to be headed by the most recently retired Chief Justice of the country and comprised of eminent apolitical personalities appointed on his advice, keeping in mind the sensitivities of the major political parties. The principal mandate of the caretaker Government will be to ensure free and fair general elections to be conducted by an independent constitutional authority, the Election Commission. Foreign observers were welcome to observe the electoral process, completely unhindered, in 1996 and 1991. Reports submitted by international observers can be of help in identifying any shortcomings or gaps that may exist and also contain constructive suggestions for improvement. These steps are the national equivalents of confidence-building measures between and among States.

Democracy, of course, goes well beyond the holding of periodic general elections. It is a continuous process and even a culture and ethos, which above all denote a certain approach and attitude to governance. We in Bangladesh see democracy as more than a laudable and desirable objective. In the long term, democratic and accountable government affords the most efficacious and stable medium to develop the economy of a State and to achieve prosperity for its people. The very apposite point has been made, however, that democracy cannot on its own be a panacea for the diverse problems that confront many countries. There must also be effective international cooperation and a supportive external economic environment if the major socio-economic problems are to be meaningfully addressed.

The cold war is now truly behind us and the object now is to win the peace. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but should encompass every human condition, necessity and amenity that make for a civilized and dignified life. It is inseparable from security and is the flip side of development. Political, economic and social issues are today intimately and intricately intertwined. Political internationalism without economic internationalism can only be likened to a house built upon sand. Most emphatically in this day and age of interdependence, no nation can achieve its fullest development alone. This is an area where the United Nations and the United Nations system clearly have a constructive role to play.

The main purposes of the United Nations, as outlined in Chapter I of the Charter, include the achievement of international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and also to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

The Bretton Woods institutions are, of course, major players in the field of development policy and research. There is also, in our view, a patent need and ample justification in the Charter provisions for the United Nations and the United Nations system to play a meaningful role in global macroeconomic policy and strategy formulation. The United Nations is the universal forum for dialogue and decisions on such issues. This is an area in which, in particular, a revitalized Economic and Social Council can play a constructive and fruitful role. While the United Nations economic role provides special focus on operational, welfare and humanitarian activities, there is certainly a need for greater harmony and coordination between the United Nations systems on the one hand and the Bretton Woods institutions on the other.

On the subject of development, let me reaffirm that a supportive external environment is an indispensable supplement to national efforts and policies. Poverty is arguably the prime source of world disorder and needs to be addressed, *inter alia*, through sustained and enhanced flows of resources from the North to the countries of the South. The gap between North and South is widening at an ominous rate. In 1890, the wealth of each European was twice that of a South Asian. Today, the gap is 70-fold. In 1960, the per capita gross national product of the richest 20 per cent of States was 30 times higher than that of the poorest 20 per cent. By 1989, the gap had widened to 60 times. By 1994, only four countries members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) had reached the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance. The average figure for DAC countries actually fell from 0.31 per cent in 1993 to 0.30 per cent in 1994. The least developed countries' share of world trade has plummeted in two decades from 0.8 per cent to a mere 0.4 per cent.

The problems of the 48 least developed countries continue to deserve special consideration on the global development agenda. The Mid-term Global Review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s has pointed to the limited progress made in the implementation of commitments by our development partners. The development initiatives of the least-developed countries are stunted by problems associated with formidable structural adjustment programmes, the decline of an already low level of development resources, and the extremely low level of exports compounded by limited market access. The debt-relief measures taken thus far have remained grossly inadequate. We urge our development partners to adopt specific and concrete measures to redress these problems. We welcome the statements of several delegations that asked the removal of barriers on the products of the least developed countries. We believe that, at the forthcoming Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in December, every participant will work to remove all obstacles to trade from this vulnerable group of countries.

The problems of developing countries are also, at one remove, the problems of the whole world, because prosperity, like peace and stability, is in the final analysis indivisible. For developed countries, assistance to the countries of the South will surely constitute an investment in a more secure, stable and, I have no doubt, eventually prosperous third world. The marginalization of developing countries would be morally indefensible, politically self-defeating and economically counter-productive. The aspirations of the South and the prosperity of the North are emphatically not mutually exclusive.

As the first United Nations Secretary-General put it, the United Nations was as strong an Organization as the representatives in San Francisco could agree upon. Half a century later, the United Nations remains the indispensable linchpin of any international order, a role for which it is uniquely conditioned, equipped and mandated. I should like to stress here that an effective and credible United Nations is even more vital and relevant for the smaller and more vulnerable States than for the more powerful ones.

In today's vastly altered world, the United Nations and its system offer even broader promise than what its founding fathers could have envisioned. However, like all organizations, the United Nations system is also subject to the Darwinian dictum of "adapt or perish". Much thought, effort and work are therefore being devoted to the goal of making the United Nations more attuned and responsive to changing times and requirements, charting its future course and defining its new emphases and priorities.

The United Nations areas of responsibility should clearly cover problems or issues between States, especially those that are pandemic in range and global in consequence. Environmental degradation, human rights, burgeoning populations, the situation and rights of women and children, the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, drugs, migration, international terrorism and corruption in international business could very well — in addition to issues of international peace, security and development — be the topical objects of United Nations policies and actions. We would, of course, want a United Nations that is streamlined and focused, open and accountable, with professional management systems and structures.

On the subject of Security Council reform, a number of proposals have been mooted, including a wide-ranging one by Italy. There is a broad convergence, if not consensus, on the idea that the overall size of an expanded Council should not exceed a figure in the low or mid-twenties. An agreement as to whether expansion should cover only the non-permanent category or both categories of seats, or could even include a new semi-permanent category, still continues to elude us. It is our view that three aspects of the issue should be given priority.

Firstly, the smaller and the more vulnerable States that by definition pose no threat to international security have the most vital stakes in the United Nations. Their interests and concerns may not be overlooked in any restructuring of the Council. Experience also shows that smaller countries with no vested interests have played a more constructive role as Council members in general.

Secondly, the objective of any reform and restructuring should be a more effective and dynamic Council. Nothing should be allowed to detract from this.

Thirdly, the moral dimension in determining criteria for possible new categories of membership or for any addition to permanent ranks should be given due consideration. This would include a country's commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter, to democratic government and the essential freedoms, human rights and, in general, respect for United Nations decisions.

The Secretary-General is the most visible symbol and personification of the United Nations and the United Nations system. We see him as something more than the chief administrative officer of the Organization, as stipulated in the Charter, because he also has important political responsibilities. A former Secretary-General was of the view that the Secretary-General should be of help in

> "filling any vacuum that may appear in the systems which the Charter and traditional diplomacy provide for the safeguarding of peace and security".

While efforts are being made to enhance the effectiveness of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the operational arms of the United Nations system, we could perhaps consider ways of strengthening the office of Secretary-General. One idea that we would commend for consideration is the establishment of a committee, along the lines of the General Committee of the General Assembly, that the Secretary-General could consult, formally or informally, collectively or by individual member, on important administrative and political issues. Such a committee would serve useful purposes, particularly in ensuring the rightful role of the General Assembly.

First, it would ensure closer interaction and exchange between the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. Secondly, it would provide the Secretary-General the benefit of dispassionate counsel and a feel for the thinking of Member States on issues in an institutional manner. And, thirdly, it would make for greater transparency in decision-making.

The objective of any reform and restructuring exercise is a strengthened United Nations that is institutionally better equipped to fulfil its mandate. Reforms, however, can only supplement, not be a substitute for the political will to do what is right and warranted by the purposes and principles and other provisions of the Charter. Over the years, when the United Nations has floundered or failed, the predominant reasons were more often, unfortunately, the lack of political will rather than insuperable local difficulties or institutional lacunas.

I should like to touch very briefly upon the dismal financial situation of the United Nations, which has become very serious indeed. Member States have every right and even a duty to demand the best value for their money. The United Nations, however, must be provided the wherewithal to discharge its responsibilities. We welcome the United States commitment to meet its financial obligations to the United Nations and to pay its arrears over a five-year period.

Some interesting suggestions on United Nations reform have emanated from the Group of Seven Summit in Lyon earlier this year. These envisage some savings from the removal of overlap, improvement in the effectiveness of some agencies and commissions, and consolidation and rationalization of certain programmes. I have no doubt that the Fifth Committee and perhaps the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will look closely at these proposals. We, of course, welcome the suggestion that any savings from such reforms are planned to be reinvested in development programmes.

A more realistic perspective of the expenditures incurred by the United Nations is afforded by comparing the United Nations budget with expenses incurred in certain activities by national or even local Governments. For example, in 1992, the United Nations regular assessed budget was about the size of the New York City Fire Department budget. In 1994, the cost of the entire United Nations system, including all emergency operations, was over $10 billion, or about $2 per capita of the planet's population. The expenditure on arms in the same year was about $150 per capita.

While every scope and avenue for greater cost-effectiveness should be explored, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the United Nations gives good value for money. Expenditures on peacekeeping and the United Nations system are in a real sense an investment in peace and security.

Disarmament has always been accorded a very high priority in the United Nations. In particular, the question of nuclear disarmament has always received the highest priority. With the end of the cold war, there is an increasing awareness of the need to address this issue in all earnestness. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last year and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly are welcome steps towards the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament. The International Court of Justice, in its recent Advisory Opinion on the issue of nuclear weapons, stressed the obligation

> "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182 (f))*

Like chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons must be outlawed. In the post-cold-war world, they have became an anachronism. They do not enhance international security and can only imperil world peace.

For Bangladesh, the pursuit of general and complete disarmament is a fundamental principle of State policy. As a new member of the Conference on Disarmament, we are fully prepared to play a constructive role towards this goal. Bangladesh, together with most members of the G-21, has submitted a proposal in the Conference on Disarmament on the elimination of nuclear weapons. This has been circulated as a Conference on Disarmament document. We accept that substantial reductions are being made under START I and START II in the nuclear arsenals of the two major nuclear Powers. The uncomfortable fact remains, however, that even after START II is completed by the year 2003 at the latest, there will still be more nuclear warheads in existence than in 1970, when the NPT came into force. The need to move speedily towards a third START treaty and beyond is very obvious.

Peacekeeping continues to be a most significant area of United Nations activity. The United Nations has indeed achieved some notable successes in peacekeeping missions in recent times, examples of which include those in El Salvador, Cambodia, Haiti, Mozambique and Angola. Bangladesh is proud to play an active role in United Nations peacekeeping activities. Our peacekeepers have shed their blood and sacrificed their lives in the cause of peace throughout the world.

There is room for cautious optimism on the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We sincerely hope that the Dayton Agreement will be implemented in its entirety and that a genuine peace will return to that beleaguered region. Bangladesh will continue to support all efforts towards this objective through regional as well as multilateral forums.

Recent developments in the Middle East have been of concern to us all. Bangladesh expressed its grave concern and outrage at the recent violence and killings that took place in the West Bank and Gaza and the disrespect shown to the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. We call upon all concerned to honour their commitments under the peace accord with a view to finding a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, which Bangladesh believes will enable the emergence of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The Government and the people of Bangladesh stand by President Yasser Arafat and our Palestinian brethren. We also reaffirm our commitment and support to the Arab and Palestinian cause.

In a very real sense, the United Nations belongs to the entire human family. Over the years, it has been a potent moral force and an influence for the good. It remains the only credible vehicle that can move the world towards the goal of international peace and prosperity. The institution of the United Nations itself, comprised of Member States large and small, attests to mankind's wisdom and desire for peace. We have every confidence and hope that, in the crucial years ahead, a revitalized United Nations will continue to play an effective role in deciding the transcendent policy issues of the day.

Differences between peoples, countries and nations can and do exist, and yet all share a common vision, hopes and aspirations. Good men and women all over the globe must surely dream the same dreams of lasting peace and happiness.

Over 50 years ago, a great world leader — one of the architects of the Atlantic Charter and one of the first persons to use the term "United Nations" — made an impassioned plea for peace when he wrote:

> "We are faced with the pre-eminent fact that if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationship — the ability of peoples of all kinds to live together and work together in the same world at peace."

President Roosevelt did not live to speak those words, which he wrote for what would have been his last address. His words are surely relevant even today.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Eldar Kouliev.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*interpretation from Russian*): I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, which attests to the recognition of Malaysia's authority in the international arena. I am confident that, under his able guidance, the General Assembly will write another exemplary chapter in the annals of United Nations history.

I also take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to the President of the last, historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the excellent manner in which he led the work of the Assembly.

The Azerbaijani Republic attaches special importance to the creation of a new world order, based primarily on the strict observance by all States of the fundamental principles of international law and on the comprehensive system of international security. World security must take into consideration the interests of all sovereign States, irrespective of their size or population. No single State should ensure its own security at the expense of another.

In a transformed world in the late twentieth century, the euphoria of post-bloc relations has begun to yield to the sober realization that mankind is faced today with acute problems of an increasingly global nature. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, aggressive separatism, international terrorism, drug trafficking and environmental pollution are common problems that must be resolved through joint efforts. In these conditions, the consolidated action of Member States will permit a quicker identification of the real mechanisms needed to address these serious problems.

Azerbaijan welcomes the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, recently opened for signature. The objective achieved had been sought for many decades. It is a major contribution to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, in particular, and disarmament in general.

Taking into account the historical experience of the world community and striving to attain the highest human values, the Government of Azerbaijan, in the person of President Heydar Aliyev, having unified the nation, is heading with determination along the path of democratic reform, since only a climate of peace and national accord based on respect for civic rights and human liberties can ensure the overall development of the individual and society and create conditions conducive to normal interaction with the world at large and the country's achievement of democratic political, economic and humanitarian standards.

However, every aspect of life in my country has been seriously affected by the aggression of the Republic of Armenia. The occupation of about 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan and the seizure and plunder of towns and villages, including tens of thousands of objects taken from households, industry, agriculture, the infrastructure and the social sector, continue to inflict enormous damage on the Azerbaijani State. "Ethnic cleansing" has been carried out in the occupied territories. The country faces an extremely serious humanitarian situation. The number of refugees and displaced persons has passed the one million mark, a figure that is catastrophic for a country with a total population of 7.5 million.

Still, we continue to consider peaceful negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk process to be the only way to settle the conflict. It was for that reason that Azerbaijan, despite the continuing occupation of its lands and the presence of enormous numbers of refugees and displaced persons, consented to the ceasefire which has lasted for more than two years.

The Republic of Armenia, endeavouring to consolidate the gains from its past aggression, refuses to recognize Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and thereby entirely discredits one of the fundamental principles of international law as a basis for settlement. That refusal has become a major obstacle to the achievement of peace.

I would like to reconfirm our clear compromise position on the settlement, which envisages the assurance of unconditional and immediate implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions regarding the conflict. The package of our proposals to speed up progress in the Minsk process towards the achievement of a comprehensive settlement consists of these elements: the withdrawal of Armenian forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the Shusha and Lachin districts; the return of the Azerbaijani population to their previous places of residence, including the Nagorny-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan; ensuring equal security, monitored by the OSCE forces, for the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations who have suffered as a result of the armed conflict; and guarantees that autonomy will be granted to the entire population of the region constituting Azerbaijan.

At their meeting on 22 April 1996 in Luxembourg, held within the framework of the conclusion of bilateral agreements on partnership and cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia and the European Union, the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia adopted a joint communiqué expressing their agreement that the resolution of the conflict will make a substantial contribution to regional stability and security as well as to the socio-economic development of the peoples of the region.

In reflecting on the establishment of a security system at the regional and pan-European levels, we would like to emphasize that in our view the forthcoming OSCE Summit in Lisbon constitutes a real opportunity for the elaboration of basic principles for the settlement, not only for the settlement, not only of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, but possibly also other conflicts in the OSCE area. The relevant provisions of the Summit's final document, agreed at the highest level, could play a most important role in the positive development of negotiations both within the OSCE Minsk process and in all other current mediatory efforts of the OSCE.

For several years since the end of the cold war active discussions have been taking place in the world on the transformation of international relations. These discussions are held at different levels and touch upon almost all aspects of life of the world community. The United Nations, as the leading international organization, is the main forum for gathering and testing a majority of ideas related to a vision and understanding of processes taking place in the world in recent years, and the possibilities for their implementation in the name of human progress.

In recent years these have been wide discussions on an increase in the membership of the Security Council or, in a broader context, on its reform in the light of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations and the major changes in international relations. In this regard, it is important to take into account the need to maintain and even strengthen the ability of the

Security Council to respond adequately to threats of international peace and security.

Azerbaijan supports the candidatures of Germany and Japan as potential permanent members of the Security Council. At the same time, the question of equitable representation of all regions among the permanent members should not disappear from the agenda. In this context, it should be noted that many other ideas and proposals have been put forward, in particular by Italy and a number of other States, which must be thoroughly studies.

Azerbaijan fully supports the efforts undertaken by the international community in response to the alarming increase in terrorist acts in recent years. We unequivocally condemn, as criminal and unjustifiable, all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, wherever and by whomever they are committed, including those that jeopardize friendly relations among States and peoples and threaten the territorial integrity and security of States. Azerbaijan supports the establishment of a specialized international organization to combat terrorism.

Azerbaijan attaches crucial importance to the process of integration into the global economic system, and considers it one of the main requisites for the formation of a multidimensional, dynamic market economy and an open democratic society. For this purpose legislation has been adopted to strengthen market economy principles, notably through laws on private property, free enterprise, banking activities, foreign investment protection, and so on. Economic reform in Azerbaijan and the implementation of economic projects are being carried out in active collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions. Concrete measures have been worked out and are being implemented to shape State economic policy for the transitional period. They include the reform of the monetary and credit system and the development of pricing and tax policies. A three-year programme to privatize State enterprises has been launched. To achieve this goal Azerbaijan actively encourages foreign investment, and has embarked on a consistent course of liberalization of foreign economic activity, the gradual elimination of non-tariff restrictions, and encouragement of national exports.

The Azerbaijan Republic agrees on the need for the structural reform and financial normalization of the United Nations. In this regard, I would like once again to draw the General Assembly's attention to the problem of the assessment of fair contributions to the United Nations budget that will reflect the real capacity of States to pay. While we welcome the decision of principle to abolish the system of limits, we nevertheless consider that the long-windedness of this process is resulting in the deterioration of the financial situation of the newly independent States, including Azerbaijan, which is obliged, in order to clear its debts to the United Nations budget, to cut down on the already very meagre programmes of social support for the population, particularly refugees and displaced persons.

The Government of Azerbaijan would also like to draw particular attention to the need for fair representation of the new independent States within the staff of the United Nations. While we are aware of the difficulties the Organization is now experiencing, we cannot accept a situation in which Azerbaijan is still not represented in the secretariats of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

The economic reforms carried out in Azerbaijan are aimed largely at improving the social situation of the population. However, the monthly income of a considerable portion of the population is below the subsistence level, given the persisting economic difficulties in a country with an economy in transition, which have been aggravated by the burden of providing the necessary assistance to the refugees and displaced persons.

In such a situation, great importance attaches to special humanitarian and other forms of assistance from the United Nations, its specialized agencies and donor countries, including assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of a number of regions of Azerbaijan that have suffered as a result of military action. While expressing the deep gratitude of the people of Azerbaijan for the assistance provided, we appeal to donor countries not to reduce its scale.

I am confident that the United Nations will continue to do its best to act as a catalyst in the achievement of peaceful coexistence among States, and to reinforce the notion of the interdependence of national aspirations and the common welfare of humanity, thus creating conditions conducive to the political stability and sustainable economic development of States.

The potential exists to reinforce and strengthen the work of the United Nations. We are increasingly witnessing the expansion of the Organization's sphere of activity, when it goes beyond the bounds of the traditional concept of maintenance of international peace and security and tackles more diversified tasks. Activities such as electoral assistance, the provision of special humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring, assistance in nation-building and the creation of conditions for the sustainable development of States have begun to be associated around the world with the United Nations today.

In concluding, I should like to recall the well-known maxim: "The best world is a world that belongs to all, and it becomes possible only through the efforts of all." So let us unite our efforts for the sake of building such a world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Royal Government of Cambodia, His Excellency Mr. Ung Huot.

Mr. Ung Huot (Cambodia)(*interpretation from French*): Allow me, at the outset, to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, on behalf of the Cambodian delegation, on his election to the post of President of this Assembly. His election is a tribute to his professionalism, as well as to his country, Malaysia, with which Cambodia has traditionally entertained close and cordial relations. My delegation is convinced that with his competence and experience, Ambassador Ismail will guide our session with wisdom and perspicacity to a successful conclusion.

My delegation would also like to congratulate and thank His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal for his successful presidency of the General Assembly's fiftieth session.

I wish also to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to an individual to whom the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia owes profound gratitude for the role he has played in the peace process in our country — the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali — for his performance and sincere dedication in accomplishing this lofty mission.

(*spoke in English*)

The forthcoming 23 October will be the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict. The Royal Government and people of Cambodia will mark this historic event with a nationwide celebration. The Agreement was forged

> "to maintain, preserve and defend the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and inviolability, neutrality and national unity of Cambodia" *(Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, DPI/1180-92077, p. 8, para. 3)*

through the restoration of peace and the promotion of national reconciliation in the country. The Cambodian people will always remember the sacrifices made by the international community on their behalf, especially those eminent persons who dedicated themselves to the cause of peace and democracy in our country. We are indeed indebted to them all and remain deeply grateful for their continued contribution to the reconstruction and development of Cambodia, allowing it once more to take its proper place in the concert of nations.

The Royal Government of Cambodia, presided over by His Royal Highness Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh and His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, was born of a free and fair election organized and supervised by the United Nations in May 1993. It is now barely three years old, but thanks to the determination of the Cambodian people and the invaluable assistance and support given by this world body and its agencies, other international organizations and friendly countries, the rebuilding of Cambodia has proceeded apace.

In "An Agenda for Peace", His Excellency the Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali spoke of the need for the United Nations to give careful consideration to the requirements of post-conflict peace-building. As can be seen from the Cambodian experience, this is a complex and multifaceted process. The Secretary-General's Representative in Cambodia The Honourable Benny Widyono commented in a recent article that

> "post-conflict peace-building is not just a collection of disjointed activities. It requires a holistic concept encompassing political, institutional, legal, economic and social objectives."

This holistic approach has also been very rapidly recognized by the Royal Government. Nine months after the general elections, it launched the National Programme for the Rehabilitation and the Development of Cambodia, in February 1994. At the same time, it was able to ensure political stability, improve security and engineer a rapid economic recovery, as reflected by a strong gross domestic product growth of 7.6 per cent, an inflation rate kept at 3.5 per cent and a stable exchange rate of the national currency throughout 1995. These figures, combined with a liberal investment law and a low gross domestic product of $287 per capita, are providing strong incentives for foreign direct investment, in particular now that Cambodia enjoys most-favoured-nation status with the United States, the European Union and other important countries in the world. Soon Cambodia hopes to obtain Generalized System of Preferences status.

In pursuing its aims of structural reforms and development while seeking to improve the quality of life of its citizens, the Royal Government is conscious of the need for environmental protection. Cambodia has become a signatory of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification. The Government is ever mindful of its responsibility to protect Cambodia's rich natural heritage, in the interests both of its people and of the world at large. Therefore, as stated by the First Prime Minister at the First Consultative Group Meeting, held last July in Tokyo, the Royal Government is committed to implementing a sustainable and transparent forest policy in line with the recommendations put forward in a joint study made by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Being profoundly conscious that development requires security, problems linked with the Khmer Rouge have to be addressed through their reintegration into the national fold, and through the long-term policy of development of rural areas. Military operations near the northwestern border are designed to gradually reduce the nuisance they pose and to convince them to join the national community. National unity remains the target of the Cambodian Government. The recent massive breakaway of the core groups of the Khmer Rouge testifies to the correctness of the Royal Government's approach.

Recognizing that Cambodia's tragic recent history requires special measures to assure the protection of human rights and the non-return to the policies and practices of the past, the Royal Government has pursued an active policy to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in Cambodia without discrimination as to race, sex or religion. In these efforts, it has received the technical assistance of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, for which the Royal Government is greatly appreciative. In particular, Cambodia acknowledges the valued contribution of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg.

Mindful that human rights encompass political rights, the Kingdom of Cambodia adopted a policy of liberal democracy and pluralism, as stated in article 51 of the Constitution of the Kingdom, in 1993. This includes the free exercise of political choice. In respect of its solemn commitment to the Constitution, the Royal Government is making preparations for the holding of local elections in 1997 and national elections in 1998. To this end, it welcomes international technical and financial assistance, as well as international observers.

The achievements of the Royal Government in a short period of time have given it the confidence to pursue efforts towards the declared aims of building a State governed by the rule of law, a market system that secures social benefits and ensuring the long term and sustainable development of the national economy within the framework of regional integration. Hence, last April, Cambodia submitted its official request for full membership in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) by July 1997, in the recognition that ASEAN is the vehicle for peace, security, stability, shared opportunities and common prosperity in the region of South-East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region at large.

Cambodia also takes note that the ASEAN Regional Forum is an invaluable setting to discuss in a frank and friendly manner security issues of common concern and interest to all participants in the Forum, whether large or small countries around the world. The ASEAN Regional Forum has in fact already provided a sense of mutual confidence, as reflected in the comfort felt by all the senior officials and high representatives of the participating countries. It can be viewed as a first step in preventive, quiet diplomacy, thereby paving the way for agreements on substantive issues in the coming years based on the traditional consensus principle, which characterizes ASEAN.

Cambodia is particularly proud to be able to associate itself with all the countries in the region and to substantially contribute to regional and world peace through the signing of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty on 15 December 1995. This marks real progress towards the creation of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia. Through the review of the Protocol to the Treaty, it is our earnest hope that all nuclear-weapon States will accede to the Treaty, in line with the aspirations of the peoples of South-East Asia for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this part of the world.

Cambodia's position on the question of nuclear weapons has been and remains that a complete prohibition of nuclear weapons and their destruction are basic to world peace. Thus, a complete test ban will lead towards the ultimate objective of complete nuclear disarmament. The Kingdom of Cambodia is proud to have been able to co-sponsor and sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, considered a significant step towards promoting nuclear disarmament. This will be the greatest service that our generation can perform to free future generations from the terrible prospect of a world holocaust.

While we are addressing the issue of the CTBT and the ban on weapons of mass destruction, we should not overlook the issue of landmines in various parts of the world. Cambodia is the hardest hit nation in the world. The Royal Government and the people of Cambodia pay great tribute to all the generous donor countries that have assisted us in our efforts to rid the country of the scourge of landmines. But how many millions of these cold, cruel and silent enemies still await our unsuspecting and innocent civilian population in remote areas of the country near the western border? Banning them is an easy job. We need international support to fully eradicate them.

In his message to the Review Conference of the States Parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons last April, His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Varman, King of Cambodia, appealed to all countries and peoples, international organizations, States and Governments to take, in a universal consensus, concrete measures towards definitively outlawing, as soon as possible, the production, export, utilization and sale of mines.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is therefore gratified by the recent Chairman's statement for the Third ASEAN Regional Forum held last July in Jakarta. On the issue of the global elimination of anti-personnel mines, the Forum welcomed the decisions of several States to impose moratoria and bans on the production, export and operational use of these weapons. It recognized the need, following conflict, for reinforcing international support for efforts to detect and remove landmines and to assist victims. Cambodia welcomes the initiatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Canada in this General Assembly and gives its full support to the proposed resolutions.

Permit me to inform you, Sir, and all distinguished delegates that my country is presently facing severe floods affecting 1.3 million people, or one tenth of our population. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and on my own behalf, I would like to sincerely and deeply thank the friendly Governments that have immediately given generous humanitarian assistance to our afflicted people. I would also like to take this opportunity to appeal to our other friends to help relieve this blight.

The Kingdom of Cambodia recognizes the need to focus attention on such issues as the trafficking in narcotics and other criminal behaviour, which transcend national borders and which can so intimately affect the lives of each one of our citizens and undermine our social structures. Such transnational issues do not appear amenable to resolution other than by immediate ongoing management through shared information and coordination. Of particularly urgent concern is the issue of drug trafficking.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a victim of a rapid escalation in the traffic of drugs transiting through its territory. Unfortunately, Cambodia at present lacks the appropriate legal, technical and financial means to deal effectively with this problem. It nevertheless affirms its strong commitment to drug control through effective international cooperation. The Royal Government wishes sincerely to thank the United States of America for its strong support under the United States-Cambodia Agreement to Counter Narcotics.

Cambodia is pleased with the decision taken by the Third ASEAN Regional Forum to consider at the next meeting the question of drug trafficking and other related transnational issues such as economic crimes, including money laundering, which could constitute threats to the security of the countries of the region.

Through the good offices of the United Nations, multilateral approaches to problems have provided useful sources of information and highlighted issues close to the hearts of many of our citizens. The past summit conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul have contributed to the promotion of gender equality, and have given recognition to the role of women and children, the improvement of the quality of life through health care and adequate housing, respect for human rights, and protection of the environment.

A further vital, and perhaps fundamental, issue for the attention of every member of the international community must be that of the widening gap between rich and poor nations. This gap and its effects on the quality of life of the citizens of the developing world is directly related to the nature, organization and health of the world economy. Vital decisions determining the shape and nature of the world economy are, however, well outside the control of a vast majority of nations, particularly those in the third world.

Since the Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta in 1992, no indications have been observed of a rapid and solid recovery in the world economy. Instabilities spread more quickly from one country to another, particularly to developing countries, which are now more vulnerable and sensitive to external factors. The continuing trend towards a global economy, with the increasingly free flow of capital throughout the world without reference to national borders, means that the ebbs and flows of the world economy have an almost immediate effect around the world. For many poorer nations, this has resulted in an increased national debt burden with the consequence of greater instability in the daily lives of their citizens.

Notions of competition are not realistic for countries that from the outset have a mammoth burden of debt, limited access to technology, and populations ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the global economy. It is Cambodia's strong hope that through the United Nations we can go a long way towards ameliorating this situation, which is already at a crisis point for many nations in the world community.

Therefore, the democratization of international economic relations is essential to ensure that the development interests of developing countries will be taken fully into account. In this regard, it is also essential to place development cooperation at the centre of the United Nations mandate, role and functions. To do this, the United Nations itself needs to begin the process of reform so that it is better able to deal with the conditions of the new global economy. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization should play a key role as focal points of the United Nations system in the areas of trade and development of developing countries. UNCTAD, in particular, needs to study trends and issues in the world economy, especially those that have an impact on developing countries, and propose policies and measures that can address projected problems. For instance, Generalized Special Preference (GSP) donors should simplify and harmonize the rules of origin. By the same token, all political conditions attached to international trade, development assistance and investment should cease. They represent, in fact, a new wave of protectionism.

(*spoke in French*)

The delegation of Cambodia is deeply concerned at the financial crisis in the United Nations today. With its modest resources, Cambodia intends to meet its responsibilities to do what it can to ease the financial crisis. But if this Organization is to continue to exist true to the spirit of its Charter, an equitable and fair solution must be found, taking into account the need for sweeping reform in United Nations structures which must reflect the rapid changes in various parts of the world that have taken place since the end of the cold war.

The broad reforms and restructuring of the United Nations must also extend to the Security Council to ensure that its work is both democratic and more effective. In particular, Cambodia supports closer relations between the Security Council and the General Assembly through greater accountability of the Council to the Assembly. Priority must be given to reform in economic, social and other areas so as better to meet the challenges and take account of the economic priorities of developing countries against the backdrop of globalization.

As one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1956 in Brioni, Yugoslavia, Cambodia has consistently worked to promote solidarity among Members and cooperate in the search for lasting peace in the world and economic development that goes hand in hand with social justice for all humankind.

As His Majesty the King emphasized in his message on the thirty-fifth anniversary of its creation, the Non-Aligned Movement is currently meeting challenges unlike those that existed when it was established. Many lofty aspirations for national independence and freedom have become fact, but as His Majesty said:

> "The majority of our members still have to deal with huge problems caused by unemployment, poverty, famine, drought, landmines, illiteracy, deforestation, racial discrimination and terrorism. We must therefore try to reduce military expenditure and the production of landmines in order to devote our national resources to the economic and social development of our peoples."

In recent years, the world has seen several developments regarding the strengthening of regional security and political stability. First of all, the Kingdom of Cambodia wishes sincerely to welcome the establishment of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development and the peace process in Mindanao. It fully supports the peace agreements concluded between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front on 2 September 1996. These agreements will undoubtedly contribute to an end to the conflict in the southern Philippines, bringing both lasting peace to Mindanao and prosperity and national harmony to the fraternal people of the Philippines.

Cambodia welcomes the Dayton Peace Agreement and the signing on 14 December 1995 in Paris of the General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Framework Agreement) between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and other concerned parties.

Cambodia welcomes the announcement of the end of the war in Chechnya, thereby ending the suffering of the warring parties, and particularly the innocent civilian population.

Cambodia welcomes progress made since August 1995 in the Middle East peace process, particularly the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, the first Palestinian elections on 20 January 1996, as well as the beginning of negotiations on the final status between the Palestinians and Israelis in Taba in May 1996. Cambodia calls for the continuation of the peace talks, bearing in mind the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent State on its national territory with the support of the international community.

My country is deeply concerned at the recent situation in Afghanistan where war continues to bring death and devastation. We hope that our Afghan brothers will be able to overcome their differences and will soon find the path to dialogue.

With regard to the situation on the Korean peninsula, Cambodia supports the reunification efforts of the Korean peoples on the basis of the principles set forth in the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 4 July 1972 and the accord of February 1992. We also welcome initiatives to formulate a definitive peace agreement promoting solid peace and security on the peninsula.

In respect of Africa, the Royal Government of Cambodia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 49/142. We are aware of the tremendous difficulties facing African States in bringing development and prosperity to their respective peoples. Cambodia calls for the speedy implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the consolidation of efforts to diversify the African economy. We hope that with the helping hand of the international community, particularly the donor countries, this great continent will profit from the opportunities available to it and join in the efforts to achieve sustainable development, a major challenge facing all the countries of the world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and External Trade of the Comoros, His Excellency Mr. Omar Said Ahmed.

Mr. Ahmed (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to address to the President the sincere congratulations of the delegation of the Comoros on his brilliant election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. My country, the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, is delighted by his election because, in our eyes, it is a unanimous tribute from the international community to his great, friendly country, Malaysia, with which the Comoros maintains excellent relations of cooperation and friendship. This choice is also a tribute to his personal qualifications as a veteran diplomat respected by all.

I also take this opportunity to convey our profound thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the devotion and skill with which he conducted the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

To Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, that intrepid artisan of the lofty ideals of peace, solidarity and justice, I should like to pay a well-deserved tribute for the efforts that he continuously makes for the benefit of our world Organization.

My country adheres entirely to the Yaoundé Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the thirty-second session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which recommends the candidature of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a second term.

Last year, the United Nations commemorated with fanfare its fiftieth anniversary. More than 129 Heads of State and Government solemnly reaffirmed the ideals of the maintenance of peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the strengthening of international cooperation and development. In the Declaration adopted at that commemorative meeting, the indispensable role of the United Nations was recognized by all. That is why the sovereign leaders of the world also called for the United Nations to be reformed and attuned to the requirements of modern times.

An objective analysis has made it possible to see that the structure of the Organization no longer corresponds to the realities of today's world, which is changing at the economic, political and geographic levels. At a time of globalization, when science and technology are revolutionizing communications, the interdependence of nations is emerging as an incontrovertible fact, and democracy is the only path of salvation for the peoples of the world, our Organization simply cannot and should not keep a body reserved exclusively to certain States on a permanent basis while the great majority has only temporary access to it.

In other words, Security Council reform is urgent and imperative if we are to act in accordance with the principle of the sovereign equality of States. In that connection, the Italian proposal for the reform of the Security Council offers specific advantages in terms of the possibility of access to the Council for small and medium-sized States.

No one denies the considerable role of the United Nations in the establishment of a global society that is more just and peaceful and better integrated. But everyone remembers the historic conditions of its creation. The end of the cold war, the elaboration of a number of conventions and treaties on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are, in our view, moral values that guarantee the emergence of a world of peace in which the right to life and well-being will win out over barbarism and brute force.

At the dawn of the third millennium, the United Nations represents the only recourse for the emancipation of peoples and the eradication of poverty. In this connection, we must emphasize the considerable work done by the Organization's specialized agencies to help States requiring assistance in their daily struggle against underdevelopment.

There is no need to recall that, in the past five years, our Organization has initiated and organized a number of thematic conferences aimed at identifying solutions capable of inspiring States in their national policy-making. These include the New York World Summit for Children, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women and, more recently, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) at Istanbul. We are also entitled to hope that next November's Rome World Food Summit will offer effective guidance in this vital area.

The founding fathers of our Organization, recalling the horrors and atrocities of the Second World War, bequeathed to us an instrument that grants primacy to law and dialogue. Unfortunately, other modern scourges, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, occupation and civil war have continued to raise the clamour of weapons within States.

The victims of these new wars are the same as those of yesterday's — women, children and the elderly.

The resurgence of violence in the Middle East in the past few days, arising from the many provocations orchestrated by the new Israeli authorities, throws into the question the peace process, which recognizes the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent State.

For my country, the resumption of the peace process necessarily involves a withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories of the Golan and southern Lebanon. The closing of the tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a *sine qua non* for reducing tensions and halting the violence. During the past 30 years of warfare in the Middle East, the victims have been and remain the civilian populations. No one can forget the Gulf war or its consequences for all parties concerned.

My country urges Iraq to seek a solution that would ensure the peace and security of its neighbours and include respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait. In this connection, the question of Kuwaiti prisoners detained by Iraq is a concern, the settlement of which would send a signal of willingness for appeasement.

The illegal occupation of the islands of Tunb and Abu Musa by Iran is also a source of tension in that part of the world. The United Arab Emirates is sparing no effort to recover peacefully that integral part of its territory.

The embargoes imposed on the Libyan and Iraqi peoples are of concern to my country. Our Organization must seek ways and means to enable the parties concerned to begin a dialogue aimed at a solution that would alleviate the suffering of the civilian populations of these countries.

The advent of a democratic and multiracial South Africa and the peace restored to Angola and Mozambique should not make us overlook the fact that the African continent is still a theatre of conflict. Like the international community, my country remains concerned over the deterioration of the situation and the persistence of violence in Burundi. Only a return to constitutional order and to republican legality can reduce tensions and foster a dialogue between all the people of Burundi. We encourage President *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere in his mediation efforts aimed at a peaceful solution.

The recent Abuja Agreement on Liberia offers a glimmer of hope for peace, provided that all the factions observe the current ceasefire and participate in the disarmament and demobilization of troops.

The Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front have made a commitment to negotiation in order to put an end to the tragic fratricidal war in that country. We can only encourage such initiatives and commend Côte d'Ivoire for its mediation.

The situation in Somalia warrants special attention. It demonstrates the inability of the international community to find a viable solution to the Somali tragedy.

The question of Western Sahara also requires in-depth consideration on the part of our Organization, because this question involves safeguarding the unity and territorial integrity of a State Member of our Organization, the Kingdom of Morocco.

Fortunately, other conflicts are coming to an end. Thus, the recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina mark a decisive new stage in the consolidation of peace and security — the only condition that would make national reconstruction possible in that country long devastated by war.

The world has become a global village fraught with inequality for its inhabitants. Indeed, the new world economic order and development strategies have not bridged the gap separating the rich and poor countries. The mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has made it possible to note that the Agenda has not had the desired impact on development, despite its harmonized priorities and objectives. But we dare to hope that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which complements the New Agenda, will stimulate the process and accelerate the integration of Africa into the international trading system. For now, small States can only expect a continued drop in the prices of their raw materials and an increasingly unbearable debt burden.

The Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, a small island State that is among the least developed, is one of those excluded from international trade because, in addition to its limited natural resources and the high cost of international transport, other political and structural constraints have been brought to bear that bridle its socio-economic development.

The recent history of my country has been characterized by a series of tragedies. The Assembly will certainly recall the dramatic events of September 1995 in the wake of the invasion of the country by mercenaries. This aroused the indignation of the international community and brought true economic and social disaster to my country. The people of the Comoros have suffered too deeply from repeated attempts at destabilization fomented from abroad. We appeal to the international community to ensure that such practices — which belong to another era — come to an end throughout the world.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our profound gratitude to France, whose military intervention, requested by the Government of the Comoros in accordance with the defence agreements between our two countries, made it possible to rout the mercenaries. In the same context, I am pleased to pay a vibrant tribute to the Organization of African Unity for the decisive role it played in restoring constitutional order.

We also extend our gratitude to the United Nations and all those who, near or far, contributed to the organization of the first free, democratic and transparent elections, which brought President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim to the highest office of my country.

This short overview of conditions in the Comoros demonstrates the extent to which the newly elected Head of State has inherited a catastrophic situation, characterized by an exorbitant external debt, an empty State treasury and months of unpaid salaries for government officials.

Yet, strengthened by his popular legitimacy and the support of a broad majority of the people of the Comoros, in six months President Taki drafted the broad outlines of political, economic and social reforms to overcome the numerous obstacles impeding the construction of a democratic, prosperous and interdependent society in the Comoros. A vast programme was set up in the economic and financial sphere that included financial stabilization measures, a State audit, monitoring of civil servants and a recovery of State movable property and real estate. The results are promising and, for the first time, there are cases of corruption and embezzlement of government funds before the Comorian justice system.

In this series of reforms, the private sector has pride of place. That is why the Government is disengaging itself from the monopoly it has enjoyed in many sectors which it has turned over to dynamic privatization that generates growth.

Official contacts have been opened with financial institutions and development partners of the Comoros in order to establish a structural adjustment programme with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to restore my country's credibility.

In the social sphere, ministerial departments — *inter alia*, those of national education and public health — have mobilized their energies to rehabilitate these very sensitive and vital sectors. An international conference on education in the Comoros is planned for next December and we invite all friendly countries, international and regional bodies to participate in that important meeting, aimed at mobilizing the necessary resources to finance education that meets the expectations of Comorian youth.

In the political and institutional sectors, the incredible proliferation of small political parties and a jury-rigged Constitution that is ineffective and difficult to implement have seriously hampered the new democratic process. Thus, the new presidential majority, comprised of more than 18 political parties out of the 25 that have been officially recognized, has merged into one great national political movement. A consultative commission comprised of all the active forces within the nation — political parties, trade unions and human rights and environmental associations — has been working to amend the Constitution. Their draft will be submitted for approval this month to the Comorian people in a referendum. As soon as it is adopted, legislative and regional elections will be held to set up a parliament for the country and municipal institutions for the regions.

After 21 years of independence, the Comoros are still being built. President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim is aware of what is at stake. He knows that we must first rely on our own efforts, but he also knows that he may rely on the effective support of the international community, especially the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to which we reiterate our complete confidence and deep gratitude for their efforts towards the development of the Comoros.

From this rostrum, I solemnly appeal to the international community to give special economic assistance to the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros.

I cannot conclude my statement without mentioning the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, which is on the fifty-first session's agenda as a separate item. At the appropriate time, I will not fail to detail developments and to express our hope of a settlement in the wake of the democratic changes that have occurred in the Comoros in the past six months.

The end of the twentieth century challenges our collective conscience to build a better world for future generations — a world without war and without poverty, a world in which injustice, violence, drugs, terrorism and fundamentalism will no longer exist. Of course, one might say that such a world is impossible because profit-seeking, protectionism and intolerance are obstacles to progress and hindrances to the well-being of humanity. But progress in science, technology and medicine reinforces our optimism.

It is in this spirit that our faith is revived in a United Nations that is more dynamic and more democratic, a United Nations in which the rule of numbers will carry as much weight as the rule of strength.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Palau, His Excellency Mr. David Orrukem.

Mr. Orrukem (Palau): It is my distinct honour to address the United Nations during this historic session, which I am confident will be remembered for all time for its adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The Republic of Palau applauds and thanks those countries that will be signatories to the Treaty, for we believe that it does much to advance our goal of ridding the planet of nuclear weapons. The Treaty, by banning further testing, will help prevent the development of more dangerous nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the Treaty will help prevent other nations from obtaining existing nuclear weapons. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty thus clearly helps to make the world a safer place for us and for all of our children.

The Republic of Palau's commitment against the creation and proliferation of nuclear weapons is long-lasting and resolute. When the people of Palau adopted our Constitution in 1978, we became the first country in the world to become a constitutionally mandated nuclear-free country. Indeed, protecting our citizens from these horrific weapons of destruction is at the very heart and soul of our Constitution.

While not every country will sign the Treaty, the fact that the world's five recognized nuclear Powers — the United States, China, France, , Russia and the United Kingdom — have agreed to abide by the terms of the Treaty and that the overwhelming majority of other nations, including the Republic of Palau, have also agreed to abide by its terms gives the citizens of my country and of every other nation on Earth the hope that one day we will be free from these catastrophic weapons of destruction and of the threat they pose to each of us and to our global environment.

Accordingly, I would like to thank all of those who helped bring the citizens of the world this Treaty, including the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, Ambassador Ramaker of the Netherlands, and especially our close neighbour and great friend, the Government of Australia, which took the lead at the United Nations in making this Treaty a reality.

Another of my nation's primary concerns is the issue of how to protect the environment while providing sustainable economic development. This is a central issue for small island nations in particular and for other developing countries around the world. The Republic of Palau is therefore very pleased by the recognition and affirmation that human beings are at the centre of sustainable development and that they have the right to a healthy, productive and meaningful life in harmony with nature.

However, to make sure that this affirmation becomes a reality, action must be taken at all levels of government, in particular at the international level. To help every nation achieve this goal, developing countries, including small island nations, must be provided the necessary resources to enable them to implement the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and other significant international conferences.

The Republic of Palau, a small island nation in the Pacific, cherishes its recognition as an independent country and greatly values its membership in the United Nations, which allows our voice to be heard on global issues such as the importance of freeing the world of nuclear weapons and protecting our global environment. We believe that perhaps the most critically important role of the United Nations is to provide a forum for nations large and small to discuss, debate and reach agreement on how best to serve economic, social, cultural and other humanitarian problems. Consequently, we believe that those countries which have made demonstrated efforts to advance regional and global peace, security and prosperity by establishing partnerships with other countries to further these causes have much to offer the United Nations as a whole and to its constituent Members individually.

In his inaugural speech to his country, United States President Bill Clinton pointed out that it is very likely that every problem we face has already been solved somewhere in the world. The challenge for us all is to communicate with each other so that we can discover those solutions. The United Nations clearly provides the forum for such dialogue and discovery to take place. The Republic of Palau believes that a greater number of voices invited to participate in these discussions can only lead to better solutions to the myriad global problems we all face.

The overwhelming support given to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty aptly demonstrates that, through many people working together, the cacophony of historically divergent voices can be harmonized for the benefit of all the peoples of all the nations on Earth.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba.

Mr. Oye Mba (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Government of Gabon, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to address this eminent gathering.

Like previous speakers, I wish to recall that this meeting is being held just one year after the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. On that occasion, the balance sheet of our activities was examined many times. Fortunately, we are all agreed that we must seek together to find solutions to the major problems of the world, thereby preventing the outbreak of conflicts by establishing effective tools for negotiation and cooperation.

For all of us who participate and who believe in it, the United Nations is a valuable tool in the service of a common ideal. This has been reflected in some positive achievements achieved through pragmatism. The essential lesson to draw from our assessments is that, while it has not yet been able to meet all the challenges before it, the United Nations has nonetheless remained worthy of our hopes.

That is why delegations from nearly all nations annually take the opportunity offered by the regular session of the General Assembly to review the major concerns of the moment and to devise new goals.

But before touching on that subject, I wish to convey to Mr. Razali the sincere and warm congratulations of the delegation of Gabon on his brilliant election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. It is a tribute to his country, Malaysia, and a recognition of his great personal qualities. He has our best wishes for success as he guides our proceedings.

I would also like to express our thanks and affection to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, for the manner in which he carried out his term of office at the fiftieth session.

To Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, I reaffirm here the support of the Government of Gabon for all his work on the tasks of our Organization and for the competence and authority he has demonstrated in carrying out his mandate, which have coincided with the formulation of United Nations reform measures. He is a worthy son of Africa who has done honour to our Organization. As all member States of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) stated at the July 1996 Summit in Yaoundé, Gabon hopes that he will continue his work.

Building lasting and orderly peace based on the sincere and active cooperation of sovereign nations is one of the major missions of the United Nations. In our interdependent yet fragmented and multipolar world, the United Nations must play a more assertive role, particularly in the emergence of a new political and economic international order. It must help us to redress the general imbalance that has gripped the world since the end of the 1980s.

The sovereign equality of all States is among the main principles of our community of nations. Accordingly, we must cultivate flexible and dynamic thought that transcends relations of power and allows our Organization to achieve its goal of universality. This is the approach one must follow with regard to United Nations reform. Many countries have made contributions and many initiatives have been taken, as can be seen in the reports of the working groups established for that purpose. Gabon is gratified.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic, stated:

> "The Security Council ... should be reformed in order to embrace the present dimensions of our Organization". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 36th meeting, p. 15)*

Restructuring the United Nations, we believe, should also include sweeping reform of its various subsidiary bodies, with a view to avoiding duplication in its functioning and programmes.

To sum up Gabon's position, we would like to say three things. First, it seems desirable and possible that the permanent membership of the Security Council could be increased without that body's becoming unwieldy. Secondly, and on this assumption, Africa should at least have one permanent seat. Thirdly, that permanent seat should be rotated among all African countries according to modalities to be defined later.

The complexity of this reform and its many political, economic and financial implications should not prevent us from laying out the configuration of international relations in the twenty-first century. Since a considerable number of Security Council decisions affect Africa, that region must not remain unrepresented on the Council, a body of paramount importance for the maintenance of international peace and security. In the context of reform, Gabon subscribes to the objectives of rationalization and the clustering of activities whenever this enhances the effectiveness of the work of the United Nations.

We must attach priority importance to the establishment of a reformed international system that can preserve the world from murderous conflicts that disrupt the economies of the warring countries — a system that can fight underdevelopment, preserve the environment and wage a worldwide combat against pandemics such as AIDS and malaria — in other words, an international system that can break down the barriers to harmony and development in a richly diverse world. It is certainly a daunting task, but only through these efforts and under these conditions can our Organization secure lasting peace in the world.

Also high on the agenda is the resolution of problems relating to development and to social progress in a climate of peace, with full respect for fundamental human rights. Throughout the years differences of opinion have arisen with respect to these issues — particularly on how to resolve them. But given their decisive importance for our future and that of the United Nations, the international community must mobilize to act on them.

More generally speaking, the time has come for us to work together to restore to the United Nations its political dynamism and the means it still lacks. Clearly, then, we have a great deal to think about.

I should like now to touch on some matters of concern, such as peace and development — values and hopes that are shared by all.

Dialogue is a prerequisite for — though not a guarantee of — achieving peace, which is indispensable for human society to develop and flourish. I refer not only to the civilized dialogue of diplomatic relations — which, of course, is essential, but rather to a dialogue that could give rise to a culture — the culture of peace. Indeed, when everything is based on violence, dialogue is impossible. As Boris Pasternak wrote, "One cannot win others over by violence".

The Bantu people value dialogue. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the President of Gabon, from this very rostrum, stated:

> "I wish to propose that a real dialogue, a permanent dialogue, be established, under the auspices of the United Nations, between Heads of State and Government of the South and those of the North. In that way, we may be able to find solutions to our common problems." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 36th meeting, p. 16)*

If each State were to refrain from attempting to impose its views on others, whatever the cost, and agreed that meeting the needs of peoples in a diverse and interdependent world requires dialogue and solidarity, then lasting peace and development can be achieved. That is why we must usher in a new era, the era of dialogue — genuine, honest and constructive dialogue.

We must continue to work together on an equal footing, with respect for humankind's interests and values. We must denounce and put an end to political violence, economic marginalization and social injustice. Dialogue must begin again: in Africa, in the Great Lakes region, in Liberia and Somalia; but also in the Middle East, in the former Yugoslavia, in Cyprus and in Chechnya — wherever it may be necessary.

Gabon is contributing, and will always contribute, to building the vast edifice of peace. Our duty, indeed our interest — in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations — lies in undertaking this task. History has taught us that no country can hope to remain an island of peace in a sea of poverty, tension and war.

I believe that it is imperative to enhance the modalities of action available to the United Nations in the field of preventive diplomacy. In this connection, we must explore further proposals to equip the Secretariat with an Early Warning System aimed at preventing conflicts from erupting.

Our faith in dialogue and our relentless pursuit of peace are the reasons why Gabon, whenever asked, has always agreed to engage in mediation to resolve domestic conflicts in neighbouring countries, with the particular goal of paving the way for a lasting peace.

In January 1996 Gabon hosted a round table aimed at inter-Chadian reconciliation. In March 1996 we also enabled our Angolan brothers to strengthen the foundations for their future understanding, in the presence of several international observers. In both cases, the goal was to settle differences and clear up misunderstandings. What was important for Gabon and its President was to break through the wall of mistrust that barred the way to reaching sincere and lasting agreements on solutions to such crises.

We cannot claim victory. The peace process in most countries is lengthy, and reversals, which can delay or jeopardize its conclusion, are frequent. For this reason, the international community must encourage and support those brothers at war who have opted for the path of dialogue to build peace. It must also promote goodwill, which will enable the warring parties to resolve their conflicts. Africa provides numerous examples of this.

The peace we seek requires not only dialogue but also other, sound initiatives such as disarmament and denuclearization. In this connection, we welcome the indefinite extension last year of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Likewise, we are proud of the fact that in March 1996, the African countries signed in Cairo the Pelindaba Text of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty on the denuclearization of our continent. Finally, we warmly welcome the General Assembly's adoption, on 10 September 1996, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I signed it yesterday on behalf of my country.

The Central African States have decided to harmonize their policies on conventional disarmament, with a view to establishing a register of conventional arms. The success of this subregional undertaking will depend not only on the will of the States of the subregion, but also on the political support and assistance of all States Members of the United Nations.

Peace is also the result of confidence-building measures. The adoption of binding legal instruments and the effective use of preventive diplomacy will allow Africa to be exorcised of the spectre of death-dealing conflicts. The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa is working towards that end. It just passed an important test with the solemn signature, on 8 July 1996, of a non-aggression pact during the thirty-second ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This important preventive diplomacy measure shows that the Governments of the Central African countries intend to give pride of place to dialogue in the peaceful settlement of disputes among them.

The signing of this pact by the Heads of State of the subregion proves the importance and priority that the countries of Central Africa accord to the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Government of Gabon thanks the General Assembly for supporting that machinery through a trust fund, which generous donors, such as Japan, are beginning to pay into.

In 1974, during the special session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Bongo, using an example from nature, and according to a Gabonese maxim, stated that:

> "When all the animals have been fed, calm reigns over the plains. (...) When the peoples of the earth have the vital minimum and maximum of dignity to which they are entitled, peace and harmony will finally have some likelihood of reigning on earth." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, sixth special session of the General Assembly, 2210th Plenary Meeting, para. 30)*

Development is certainly essential to peace. I would even go as far as to say that it is an intrinsic element of peace.

Although Africa has been wrestling with serious economic, social and political problems for over two decades, it is safe to say that henceforth it will vigorously and courageously undertake the reforms needed for its recovery.

However, African countries can make progress in this direction only if they are given adequate support by the international community, and by the developed countries in particular.

The goals of sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms set in the plans of action of several international conferences have sustainable development as their common denominator.

We are witnessing an era of radical change comparable to the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. The globalization of the economy and of information and communications is changing relations among nations and increasing interdependence.

While these trends inspire great hope, they also raise numerous concerns because the impact of globalization varies from country to country. Those in Africa, in particular, where most come under the category of least developed countries, are facing a worrisome economic situation. Despite declarations and programmes of action, resources are not forthcoming.

International economic and financial relations are changing radically and quickly, as is clear from the events of recent years. The establishment of the International Seabed Authority which is well under way and which we welcome; the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995, which is accelerating the easing of restrictions on free trade and its globalization; and the gradual establishment of large regional blocs in various parts of the world are all features of the new international order.

This situation, which is conducive to the emergence or consolidation of poles of integration, is far, on every score, from benefitting African States, whose income, which derives essentially from basic commodities, remains vulnerable to price fluctuations on the international market that are out of their control.

In addition, our continent's heavy debt burden means that our region is responsible for the greatest volume of reverse financial transfers due to debt repayment.

Structural adjustment programmes, although beneficial, mean that populations have to make enormous sacrifices. These programmes are now being followed in countries undergoing political reorganization. Because of the way democracy works, it is assumed that citizens support the proposed programmes. Inevitably, this increases the demands made by society. For Governments, it is truly difficult to find a balance between these contradictory requirements.

Of course, to remain credible partners we must abide by the requirements that go along with structural adjustment and the recovery of our economies. But we are duty-bound to include social needs when formulating and implementing reforms. The adoption of measures to promote sustained economic growth should not distract us from financing basic social and economic infrastructures such as roads, schools, hospitals, vocational training centres and so on.

This financing is essential if we are to improve our populations' living conditions and quality of life. As representatives know, the United Nations remains sensitive to this approach. Encouragement is needed, however, to ensure that this feeling is shared by its various agencies.

Governments have been called on to include poverty-eradication strategies in general, people-oriented development policies. How do we do this?

In establishing a favourable economic environment, the international community must support the efforts of all countries that are willing to take this course of action. As 1996 marks the beginning of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, common objectives and the commitments entered into in the framework of overseas development assistance must now become reality.

However, since 1991, this assistance has declined in real terms. Private capital flows have been exclusively focused in some 20 developing countries. So far, there has been no upsurge in private investment in countries of the African Financial Community (CFA), despite the considerable devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994.

We hope that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa recently launched by the Secretary-General will ensure that the United Nations system as a whole, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, will help to mobilize the international community. Likewise, the international community must look into the crucial issue of debt, because it is jeopardizing the development of our countries.

My country believes that new solutions to deal with debt, its conversion or refashioning in the interests of economic and social development are essential to alleviate its heavy burden and to make it compatible with development, in the spirit of consensus prompted by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

We reject and label as unjust any discrimination or classification between developing countries, as this usually makes Gabon ineligible for much of the assistance it requires for its development.

African peoples and Governments are not sitting idly by, waiting for assistance from the international community. They are tirelessly making tremendous efforts to overcome the crisis they face. I am pleased to mention in this respect the positive role that the Organization of African Unity is playing in backing our efforts.

OAU, in submitting the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community in June 1991 in Abuja to our Heads of State and Government for signature, understood that in the new international scenario, multilateral relations supersede bilateral relations.

The Abuja Agreement entered into force in May 1994, and the first ministerial session of its Economic and

Social Commission will be held next November in Abidjan. Subregional economic communities are becoming stronger all the time. Outside institutional frameworks, these economic blocs are implementing common programmes on currency, payment methods, business law, the development of scientific and technological capacity, energy resources, the environment and so on.

In the Central Africa subregion, our countries are involved also in subregional integration, which they see as a major component of development policy.

It was in this spirit that the thirtieth summit of the Central African Customs and Economic Union was convened in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 20 to 22 December 1994. The entry into force of customs reform on 1 July 1995 and the signing in July 1996 in Libreville of a text that establishes the Central African Economic and Monetary Community are designed to coordinate and strengthen the various regional integration efforts.

These are the main ideas that Gabon wishes, through me, to contribute to our consideration of the major concerns facing the international community today. Indeed, some of these questions are far from being resolved. We hope that discussion of these issues will continue, without getting bogged down and with the participation of all, in order to find solutions that can provide equitable and comprehensive guarantees for the interests of all of our countries. These interests are, basically, participation in forging a future for the United Nations; the maintenance and consolidation of peace; progress; and economic development.

Members may have noticed that I have dwelt on economic development concerns. I have done so not because I am biased, but because we in Gabon believe that true peace cannot exist amid poverty and destruction. As the Romans said, "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" — "If you desire peace, prepare for war".

Today, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, and in both domestic and international contexts, we should say instead, "If you desire peace, prepare for development", because development and economic progress has truly become the face of peace.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.27

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 8 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) *(interpretation from French)*: Almost two years have passed since the establishment of constitutional order and the rule of law in Haiti. The spectre of an illegal government and the acts of violence it perpetrated has vanished. The Haitian people, with the support of the international community, have succeeded in demonstrating in a country that the rule of law is more important than effectiveness where political shake-ups are common. Today, democracy and tolerance are part of the Haitian scene, breathing new life into the struggle to preserve freedom.

However, for this success to be complete, it must lead the way to security, knowledge, expertise and hope and to the well-being of seven million Haitians, who are still waiting for the realization of the dreams inspired by the return to democracy. Thus, the thorny question of socio-economic recovery — the true prerequisite for the consolidation of democratic gains — is more pressing than ever.

The United Nations has since 1991 been a focal point for the Haitian people, because the Organization did everything in its power to give full force to the rule of law in my country. That is why I attach great importance to the outcome of the fifty-first session, which should confirm the commitments we made last year, at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, to peace, international security and development. I am certain, Mr. President, that your leadership, your experience and your personal qualities will ensure the success of our work.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the work that he accomplished as President of the fiftieth session.

I also wish to pay sincere tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose tireless efforts are breathing fresh life into the Organization. The Government of Haiti acknowledges his active role in resolving the Haitian crisis. His latest report on the situation in our country reveals the perceptiveness of his analysis and his profound understanding of Haitian affairs.

Since the international community, through the United Nations, has invested in Haitian renewal, we have a duty to report to the Assembly on the progress made by the Haitian Government and the difficulties it is facing, and on its commitment to national development and to international peace and security.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The general elections held on 17 December 1995 led to the installation on 7 February 1996 of a new Government and to the renewal of Parliament. The new Government team is striving to ensure respect for public freedoms and human rights, in spite of the various constraints it is facing. It is encouraging free expression of opinion and the establishment of organized bodies to improve the functioning of civil society.

However, in its efforts to establish a democratic society and the rule of law, the Haitian Government must labour under two constraints: the economic problems that worsened after the *coup d'état* and the shortcomings of the judicial system, which have given rise to frustration among the population. Those factors have combined to create a state of affairs favourable to those forces that are against change, which have not yet abandoned their plans to destabilize the Government.

With respect to the reform of the justice system, the Government is mindful of the urgent need to end the incompetence and corruption of most magistrates. To that end, on 3 October of this year it submitted to Parliament a bill outlining the substance of the reforms to be undertaken to correct the discredited justice system and make it more credible and accessible.

An independent judiciary will be a crucial element in the reform. The Government is taking every step to ensure the elimination of any hindrance to judicial impartiality and integrity. Similarly, it is doing its utmost to provide the system with the means it needs to function properly.

For some time now Haiti has been experiencing an acute economic crisis. National productivity is declining. Infrastructures are seriously dilapidated. Real gross domestic product fell an average of 5.11 per cent from 1991 to 1995. The country's balance of trade is in chronic deficit, amounting to $440 million, or 22 per cent of gross domestic product for fiscal year 1994-1995. Exports have dropped to less than $100 million.

At the macroeconomic level, the Government is currently pursuing an economic policy that takes into account the need to curb inflation, balance the budget, reform financing, combat corruption, impose austerity on public administration and ensure equilibrium among the macroeconomic variables.

That programme, which is supported by the international financial institutions with which we have worked out clear-cut modalities for negotiation and cooperation, will enable us better to meet an economic and social future that will be more promising and that will better favour the integration of the Haitian economy into the world scene.

A production-oriented policy should emphasize increased agricultural and industrial output. However, we must take into account that Haiti's agriculture is in crisis because it is unable to meet its two main goals: food security and increased export earnings for the country. Thus, the Government is striving to establish technological and social conditions that can relaunch national agricultural production.

In the same spirit the Government is giving special attention to relaunching industrial production. A strategy has been developed to restore a climate favourable to business, which is a necessary condition for promoting investment, which is the driving force of industrial development. There can be no question that such an objective can be achieved only through close cooperation between the country's various sectors. We believe, *inter alia*, that a dynamic private sector open to foreign investment is a necessity for economic growth.

The present Government recognizes that future development can be achieved only if we protect our natural resources. Thus, it intends to take steps to curb deforestation and soil degradation. Safeguarding our environment is one of our priorities.

Equally aware of the role played by the tourist industry in the world economy, the Government has devised a set of directives covering the principal elements of national tourist policy. It is encouraging to note that activities in that sector are beginning to pick up.

On the social level, the Haitian Government believes that there is a vital need to combat poverty, illiteracy and deficiencies in health care. The struggle against poverty entails a demonstration of strong political resolve to distribute the country's scanty resources on a fairer basis and to take steps to combat unemployment and encourage private investment.

The persistence of a high rate of illiteracy is a major handicap when it comes to improving economic results and raising social standards. Over the next four years the Government intends to achieve a significant increase in the number of children attending school. Here, we should note that particular attention is being put on improving health conditions in the country, and in that regard a programme of action has been developed that will be implemented by mobilizing all available resources and with the support of certain bilateral and multilateral partners.

The task before us is enormous, but we are confident that we can meet the challenge, thanks to the determination of the Haitian people and the continuing support of the international community, which has been unstinting in its efforts to help resolve problems that threaten international peace and security.

On the subject of international peace and security, the international community has once again this year been torn between fear and hope as it has confronted developments in situations in various parts of the world. Long-standing conflicts have shown encouraging positive signs, while new outbreaks of violence have exacerbated world tensions.

Thus, the Haitian Government welcomes the positive developments in the situation in the former Yugoslavia, marked by the holding of general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is truly heartening to see that the peace process has once and for all, we hope, replaced the spiral of warfare and hatred, with its concomitant systematic violations of human rights.

The initiatives taken by the Organization, in particular the creation of the United Nations Protection Force and the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, have greatly contributed to creating a climate favourable to peace and ethnic reconciliation in that country.

With regard to the Middle East, my Government wishes to express its satisfaction at the resumption of dialogue there. It encourages the two parties to continue their efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

On our own continent we welcome the prospects of peace that have appeared in Guatemala, after 35 years of armed conflict. The Haitian Government commends the United Nations on the leading role it has played in that peace process.

Our Organization should not only intervene in regional and inter-State situations that pose a threat to international peace and security but also contribute to help eradicate such dangerous evils as international terrorism and illicit drug trafficking or to assist in finding solutions to certain problems that threaten mankind's survival, such as the nuclear-arms race. In that regard, my Government followed with interest the negotiations held within the framework of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament and decided to become a sponsor of the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly, in the conviction that the Treaty was already a step towards nuclear disarmament. That is why, two weeks ago, on behalf of my country's Government, I signed the text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, whose adoption by 156 States Members of the Organization eloquently attests to the profound desire of all nations to build a safer world for future generations.

Terrorism and illicit drug trafficking also represent grave threats to international peace and security. Coordinated action involving all members of the international community will be increasingly necessary in order to eradicate these scourges. As far as terrorism is concerned, the Haitian Government has always vigorously condemned indiscriminate acts of violence against innocent individuals and believes that the international conventions adopted on this question provide a legal framework for the prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes. However, along with laws and criminal punishment, we must also try to find a solution to the problems at their source.

Mindful of the gravity of the situation, the member countries of the Organization of American States convened a specialized conference on terrorism that met in Lima, Peru, from 23 to 26 April 1996. The Republic of Haiti signed the Declaration adopted on that occasion with a view to preventing, combating and eliminating terrorism within the overall framework of the applicability of international law, respect for the sovereignty of States, the principle of non-intervention and strict compliance by States with their rights and duties. The Haitian Government also subscribes to the new actions recommended by the Ministerial Conference held in Paris on 30 July 1996.

In the area of international drug control, I would like to note that the Republic of Haiti is aware of the effort being made by the international community to tackle the phenomenon of drug abuse and drug trafficking. It is increasingly necessary for us to define, by means of appropriate conventions, an integrated framework for the relentless struggle that we need to wage against drugs in all phases: production, consumption, abuse, money-laundering and money-recycling, extradition and international prosecution of traffickers and confiscation of goods.

Last year the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization allowed us not only to take stock of its record and of the activities it has undertaken but also to reopen the question of the reform of the United Nations necessary to tackle the challenges of the approaching twenty-first century.

As far as the expansion of the Security Council is concerned, the Haitian Government would like a consensus to be reached on a new configuration of that important body that would favour active participation for all States in the activities of maintaining international peace and security.

At the same time, we need to find ways and means to revitalize the Economic and Social Council. While recognizing the positive actions of the Economic and Social Council in various aspects of development over half a century, the Haitian Government believes that it is possible to improve its operation in order to make it a more effective instrument to promote sustainable development.

We stand at a turning point in history where we are faced with grave dangers as well as many signs of hope. In Haiti we are striving to restore hope to our people in order to make a complete break with a past of suffering and deprivation. It is also the responsibility of all States to make the reform of our Organization a reality so that it can usher in a better world for future generations.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Saleh Kebzabo, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kebzabo (Chad) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. Your selection is not only a recognition of the contributions of your country, Malaysia, in the defence of the ideals of the United Nations but is also a confirmation of your talents as an experienced diplomat.

Allow me also to express my thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his masterful guidance of the historic commemorative session of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

I would like to pay once again a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to reiterate our support for his constant efforts on behalf of peace and development.

May I also transmit to our Assembly the message of hope and the wishes for success of the President of the Republic of Chad, General Idriss Deby.

The life of a nation is often stamped by events written in golden letters in the great book of their history. 1996 is going to be one of those pivotal years along the road to democracy in Chad. Indeed, at preceding sessions, Chadian delegations regularly informed our Assembly of the substantial progress achieved in this area. I can affirm to you today that the process is ongoing, is getting stronger and becoming day by day an irreversible reality. I offer as proof the two major elections that took place peacefully and quietly.

First, last March, the people of Chad gained a Constitution that then gave them the opportunity to elect freely and democratically for the first time in their history, with direct universal suffrage, a President of the Republic from among 15 candidates. Yes, after two hard-fought rounds of voting the people of Chad chose President Idriss Deby, who was officially inaugurated as President of the Republic of Chad on 8 August 1996 for a term of five years.

Nonetheless, the process is still under way. Before the end of the year the people of Chad will be called upon to elect their representatives to the future national assembly. The parliamentary election will bring to a close the first phase in the establishment of the institutions called for by the Constitution.

Numerous international observers were present in our country during the elections. They observed that the elections took place properly and that the Chadians showed discipline and political maturity. The organization of the elections would not have been possible without the contributions of Chad's traditional friends, most notably, France, the United Nations system and international and non-governmental organizations. This contribution supplemented the efforts of the Government of Chad itself, which, despite its serious economic and financial constraints, assumed a part of the financing of the operations. Here we wish to thank all those whose multifaceted support and assistance made it possible to achieve these happy results. I take this opportunity to again appeal urgently to the international community to support Chad in the organization of future elections, in particular the legislative elections scheduled for next December.

It is often said that there can be no lasting economic development without democracy. The latter, as we all know, is a long, evolving process. Thus, slowly, patiently, at its own pace and in the light of its own realities, Chad is providing itself with the democratic institutions that must support its socio-economic development efforts, which is the highest priority of the programme of action of the Government of Chad.

Thus, like a host of other countries, Chad has developed, in collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions, a structural adjustment programme. It has also just negotiated and concluded with the Paris Club of Industrial Country Creditors a partial deferment and rescheduling of its public debt. These actions are designed to control Government expenditure and ultimately to reduce the current budget deficit. The main goal is to arrive at a surplus which would allow Chad to build the basic infrastructures which are essential to the promotion and development of economic activities. The Government of Chad is also re-energizing its private sector, which generates employment, privatizing State enterprises and vigorously reforming tax-collection services and economic development programmes.

Another concern of my Government is the constant quest for peace and security. As the Assembly knows, war has stalked my country for more than two decades, which has completely undermined its structures. This is why we must work to restore peace and security, which inevitably involves regaining control of the army. I can affirm to the Assembly that efforts have been made and are continuing to this end. Thanks to friendly countries and the World Bank, more than 21,000 soldiers have been demobilized, an operation which will continue. However, our demobilization efforts will be in vain if this means putting out onto the street men who know how to handle weapons and are capable of causing unrest and insecurity. This is why a programme to reintegrate them into society must be implemented immediately. Only then will the reform programme succeed and ensure that we have a disciplined army, a true melting pot of the nation, at the service of development: this is our ambition.

The aftermath of war must be overcome, and at the top of our list of priorities is to de-mine an area equivalent to one quarter of our national territory. The mines planted during the occupation of part of our country continue indiscriminately to kill and mutilate civilians, women and children in particular. This is an alarming situation because it hinders any development programme in a region which, nonetheless, has enormous potential for mining and tourism.

It goes without saying that national rehabilitation cannot succeed, once again, without the assistance of the international community.

As far as my country is concerned, and despite the problems I have just mentioned, Chad is resolutely determined to work for sustainable socio-economic development. The people of Chad, in an atmosphere of peace and freedom, decided to unite for the sake of their own development. To this end, we would like to see increasing external assistance, so designed to help us to reach the point where we no longer need such assistance. Help us to develop, so that we do not become too great a burden on the countries represented here. That is our message to the developed countries.

The international situation is also of concern to us. Chad is not alone in the world, and what happens in that world, even if it is beyond us and if matters are settled outside Chad, concerns us all the same. The rampant crises in various parts of the world raise the question of what became of the hopes that were raised by the end of the cold war. We in Africa applaud the progress towards restoring peace and security in countries such as Mozambique, Angola and Liberia. But these achievements have to be consolidated. We can do this if we mobilize ourselves and shoulder our responsibilities.

We deplore the situation of latent war in Somalia and the Great Lakes region. Genuine efforts should be made by the international community; the parties involved also need to show political will to end their fratricidal confrontations.

The challenge is the same in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement must be vigorously supported so that a permanent peace can be established in that part of the world.

In the Middle East, the peace process which began with Israeli and Palestinian reconciliation seems to have been thrown into question in the light of events in recent weeks. We pay tribute to the very recent diplomatic initiatives to try and restore dialogue between the different parties, despite the lukewarm results. Chad exhorts them to respect their commitments to avoid a new flare-up in the region.

My country fully endorses the numerous efforts made with regard to disarmament. Thus we welcomed with satisfaction the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty signed in Cairo, the non-aggression pact in Central Africa signed in Yaoundé and the adoption here in New York of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which Chad signed this very morning.

Similarly, faced with the horror caused by mines, those deadly devices, Chad welcomes the initiatives taken to eliminate them. Consequently, we are prepared to support any measure to that end.

The 1990s will have been devoted to attempts to find global solutions to the serious economic, social and environmental problems facing part of humankind. Chad, as a Sahelian country, welcomes the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa and hopes to see rapid implementation of its provisions.

We also hope that the forthcoming World Food Summit will meet expectations in terms of food security and water management, issues which give rise to often deadly conflict. Moreover, we should meet the new challenges facing the world: drugs, organized crime, pandemics, terrorism and religious intolerance. Increased international cooperation seems essential if we are to eliminate these scourges which Governments cannot deal with individually.

Here, I would like to congratulate the United Nations Children's Fund for its actions on behalf of children, in particular its vaccination programmes, including the programme to eradicate poliomyelitis before the year 2000. We also encourage the World Health Organization to step up its efforts to contain and eliminate the modern pandemic, AIDS.

The fiftieth anniversary of our Organization provided an opportunity for the international community to think about the future, reform and how to re-energize the United Nations.

But, like all human activities, only by making all this a reality will our Organization be able to achieve the ideals of peace, security and well-being laid down in the Charter and to which our peoples aspire.

I cannot conclude without joining with many preceding speakers in paying tribute to the immense work done over the last four years by our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. His action on all fronts, and the availability, willingness and courage of the Secretary-General have enabled our Organization to foresee and resolve many conflicts. In that connection, I want to make it very clear that our country, Chad, will support the Secretary-General without reservation.

The President: I now call on the next speaker, His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Maldives.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): At the outset, allow me, Sir, to say how gratified we are to see you presiding over this Assembly. Your election to that high office is a well-deserved recognition of your personal qualities and experience, and also of Malaysia's important role in this Organization and in the international arena. I have no doubt that you will lead the work of this Assembly to a fruitful conclusion.

It is also my privilege to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the exemplary manner in which he discharged his onerous responsibilities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his untiring efforts in the cause of peace and development. While we realize the difficulties and the complexity of the challenges that lie ahead in the years to come, we remain confident in his wisdom and competence in steering this universal Organization towards the fulfilment of its responsibilities in accordance with the principles of the Charter. My delegation sincerely wishes him every success in his endeavours.

Last year, we proudly celebrated 50 years of achievements. As we slowly begin the countdown to the centenary celebration of the United Nations, on behalf of the generations to come, we see ourselves coincidentally on the threshold of a new century as well. My delegation feels that this is a unique opportunity for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the purposes and principles of the Charter with greater determination and commitment to strengthening the United Nations so that the menacing trends in human relations which caused so much misery and destruction in the past can be halted and reversed, and that existing inequalities among nations and peoples can be eliminated, creating a new atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect, and a new sense of shared responsibility for development and progress.

Over the past 50 years, the Organization has grown fourfold and has become the most representative — certainly the only universal — institution serving the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. This truly global Organization has an immense capability to mobilize international efforts to deal with global problems relating to economic, social and environmental issues. It also possesses the potency to promote universal standards of human rights despite differences in the historical, cultural and religious backgrounds of nations and communities. Admittedly, the Organization has experienced rough times and has suffered several setbacks during the course of its existence. However, with the demise of the cold war that haunted the Organization for nearly four decades, a more favourable environment has emerged, enabling us to respond collectively to the challenges of the future.

Mr. Seydon (Niger), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My country is among the smallest and the least developed countries of this Organization. For us, the United Nations is extremely important in safeguarding our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. For us, it is the protector of freedom and justice, particularly for the weak and the vulnerable. It is also the beacon of hope for hundreds of millions of people in the developing world for a better future free from hunger and disease. Therefore, we feel the need to steadily strengthen, revitalize and reform the Organization in order to make it more effective, more democratic, and ready to react and respond without bias to situations that threaten international peace and security.

It was with this in mind that we joined in the initiative, way back in 1979, to include on the agenda an item on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. My delegation welcomes the reform and adjustment process that is now under way and sincerely hopes that the process will not compromise the principles of the Charter, which emphasize multilateralism, mutual respect and shared interests, including the interests of small States. In this context, my delegation feels that the proposal made by Italy in the Working Group on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council deserves our attention and careful consideration. There is no doubt that the more representative the United Nations is, the more democratic it will be; and that the more accountable the United Nations is, the more effective it will be, thus benefitting us all, small or large, weak or powerful, rich or poor.

Reforming the Organization alone will not serve the desired purposes unless the commitment of Member States to uphold and abide by the principles of the Charter and their obligations is fulfilled. We are concerned that the Organization is undergoing the worst financial crisis in its history. We are reminded that the main cause of the financial predicament is the failure of Member States to meet their financial obligations on time and in full. While my delegation has every sympathy towards those countries which have genuine difficulties, we note that by far the greater number of cases in arrears are those which have the capability to pay. We note with disappointment that the richest Member of this Organization is among those who fail or refuse to pay their dues. It is ironic that the effects of this severe financial crisis have to be borne most adversely by the smaller and the poorer States of the Organization, which in many cases are obligated under the current scale of assessments to pay more than their fair share. In spite of its limited resources and the frequent economic difficulties it faces, I am pleased to say that my country continues to pay its share of contribution in full, as we are convinced that only resources and efforts can produce results.

Meanwhile my delegation believes that the efforts of the international community to reform the administrative and budgetary functioning of the United Nations should aim at utilizing the scarce resources of the Organization more efficiently. In this regard, the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve a more lean and effective Secretariat geared to take on the challenging tasks entrusted to it warrant recognition. We also welcome the recent measures towards eliminating redundancy, duplication and waste, for only a sound organization can ensure the success of its mission.

The world has never offered a greater opportunity than today to address critical developmental problems and challenges. The international community has emphasized the importance of a revitalized and enhanced system of international cooperation for development. The sheer number of major international conferences held during the past few years and the collective resolve documented offer adequate testimony to this strong desire. The outcome of these conferences fostered a common concept of sustainable economic development for the betterment of mankind as a whole. However, despite all these positive developments on the international economic and social scene, my delegation is convinced that unless these ambitious programmes are backed by the necessary resources and political will, no change can be achieved. We also feel that all activities of international economic and development cooperation, including those undertaken by the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, must be coordinated and closely linked with the development strategies and programmes of the United Nations system. After all, this Organization remains the most representative institution.

While the globalization and liberalization of the world economy gave some developing countries the opportunity to assume a more prominent status in the world economy, the least-developed countries — a category to which my country unfortunately belongs — continued to be marginalized. The standard of living in least-developed countries has in effect declined over the years, and the poverty level has intensified in many of these countries due to indolent economic growth, which in turn was subject to outside factors. The overall decline in official development assistance over the years has further aggravated the conditions of the least-developed countries at a time when aid is most needed.

This unfavourable situation, if allowed to drag on, could be calamitous for countries, such as the Maldives, with severe resource constraints and fragile infrastructures. For this reason, my delegation can only appeal for priority action on various international development commitments, such as the Paris Declaration and Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. These have been endorsed at various recent global conferences. Admittedly, liberalization of trade has resulted in greater trade. However, liberalization has also meant the loss of the only advantage that the least-developed countries had — their privileged status — and the consequent loss of their markets. Liberalization has therefore, in effect, contributed to the marginalization of many developing countries.

The inherent obstacles facing small States, particularly small island States, and their vulnerability, deserve special attention. Small island States like my own require favoured treatment to prevent them from slipping back from their well-earned achievements.

In this context, I also wish to express the need for an incisive examination of the criteria for least-developed-country status and related issues, including the graduation process, in order to do justice to the poorest among the poor countries when the criteria come up for review next year. The per capita index used to classify countries for assistance purposes is no longer adequate, particularly in the case of small States. It fails to capture the special problems faced by these countries and their vulnerability to external shocks. In this context, the development and use of a vulnerability index, along with other criteria, may be feasible in order to minimize these inadequacies.

On the other hand, many of the poorest countries are still entangled in a web of external debt from which they are unlikely ever to be able to free themselves. My delegation believes that more steps should be taken to lift the debt burden from the poorest and most indebted countries by increasing the debt relief measures of bilateral creditors and by greater involvement of multilateral agencies in this responsibility. The developed countries can also help in eliminating the situation by demolishing the barriers they still maintain against imports from the less developed countries, in particular those which are suffering from the burdens of external debt.

Poverty cannot be eliminated through charity, but only through cooperation. In this context, we welcome the proposal of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to cut the number of people living in absolute poverty by half in the next two decades.

We are fully committed to the efforts of the international community to safeguard the global environment, especially by building the capacity of the United Nations to promote sustainable development for all. We welcome the work carried out by the Commission on Sustainable Development in this regard, and are looking forward to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development review conference in 1997. My delegation is confident that this review process will give the international community the opportunity to rededicate itself once again to the preservation of the global environment. Only concerted efforts on all fronts can produce encouraging results in this daunting challenge. For the Maldives, the environment is an important issue. We are conscious of the fragility of our islands and we hope to be able to protect them from the potential dangers arising from global warming and sea-level rise. We are also determined to keep our country environment-friendly, clean and unpolluted. Though the land area we have is so limited, I am happy to mention that in the Maldives we initiated a programme in January this year for planting one million trees in three years; I presume that if all countries represented here would initiate similar programmes at a rate of four trees per capita, the world would be greener and cleaner in 10 years.

The importance of disarmament for the preservation and maintenance of world peace and security cannot be overemphasized. We believe that, with the treaties and bilateral agreements concluded, and the ongoing negotiations among the nuclear-weapon States, and also with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons last year, the international community is now reaffirming its commitment to global disarmament and renewing the hopes for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. My delegation is pleased about the positive approaches taken by the nuclear-weapon States towards the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, despite the lack of consensus. We are particularly happy that the Treaty has now been opened for signature.

We also would like to praise the role played by the United Nations in demining and mine clearance, and to congratulate those involved in this dangerous activity for their bravery and dedication. Anti-personnel landmines have caused enormous human suffering and continue to maim and incapacitate countless innocent men, women and children. We look forward to a worldwide ban on this horrible and inhuman instrument of killing.

My delegation is firmly committed to the concept of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace and would like to take this opportunity to call upon all regions, especially the countries in the region of South Asia, to which we belong, to make every effort to bring about the proposed nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia without any further delay.

Internal strife generated and fanned by ethnic, religious and other factors is a recent trend, which is causing large conflagrations in some parts of the world. While our Organization gropes for effective mechanisms to respond to such exigencies, we should not ignore the serious threats posed by drug traffickers, terrorists and mercenaries, particularly to small States. Terrorist incidents have increased alarmingly over the last few years. My delegation is fully convinced that the international community should intensify its efforts to combat terrorism. The early entry into force of the Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries will be a step forward in addressing these threats. We urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention as early as possible. Similarly, my delegation would like to call for the strongest possible international action against drug traffickers, who are not only poisoning the fabric of human life but also draining the potential for productivity and prosperity of nations by exploiting the vulnerable elements in our societies.

Though deeply concerned over the recent violence in Palestine and in the occupied lands, which resulted in the death or injury of hundreds of men, women and children, my delegation is happy to observe that despite the numerous difficulties that exist, the Middle East peace process is continuing to move forward. We fervently hope that the agreements reached so far will be implemented fully and without further delay.

The important and critical role played by the proponents of the peace process, especially the United States, deserves the appreciation and praise of the international community and should not be forgotten. My delegation is convinced that their positive role will continue to be instrumental to the success of the peace process. At the same time, we also feel that the United Nations should continue to play its important role in providing means to the Palestinian people in their just struggle for the restoration of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to the establishment of a sovereign State which could coexist with its neighbours in peace and harmony.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is encouraging, but we need to remain alert. The Dayton Agreement has finally paved the way to creating a lasting peace in Bosnia. The fulfilment of the commitments of the international community is, however, critical to the achievement and consolidation of full peace. We also believe that it is important and necessary to bring those responsible for the atrocities and the crimes of genocide to justice and to punish them.

My delegation remains convinced that the United Nations is the most viable and dependable universal institution today. It is the responsibility of all of us to allow this universal Organization to play a more central and active role in shaping and harnessing international cooperation for economic growth and development. It is also our conviction that the dedication and collective endeavours of the international community, which have enabled the United Nations to survive the past 50 years, will inspire us all to greater heights of unity and cooperation so as to preserve and maintain the principles of the Charter, promote its objectives, and strengthen the

Organization, thereby enabling it to better serve and enhance the well-being of the peoples of the world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Legal Affairs and Local Government of Grenada, His Excellency Mr. Raphael Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher (Grenada): Virtue constitutes the greatest form of human strength. Indeed, the very origin of the word "virtue" connotes manly strength — not merely physical strength, but moral strength. With respect to human interaction, it is a widely acknowledged truth that the greatest form of power arises when virtue is furnished with means. That is the concept that gave birth to the United Nations, inspired its noble deeds, and generally continues to inform its operations. Accordingly, our celebration last year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was quintessentially a collective expression of rejoicing in the wisdom embodied in that powerful truth, as well as an explicit, joint recommitment on the part of Member nations to act in accordance with the principle of empowerment of virtue, through the supply of appropriate means.

In this context it is, for me, a great honour to be afforded the opportunity to address this very distinguished gathering of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. This event is easily the most important in the world calendar, as far as political deliberations are concerned.

My delegation conveys to this Assembly the greetings of the Government and the people of Grenada, and congratulates His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We were particularly impressed with the way in which Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal conducted the affairs of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, and take this opportunity to thank him for his handling of those proceedings.

My delegation further expresses appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his vision and willingness to confront the many challenges that the Organization has recently been facing and, specifically for his dedication in seeking to solve world problems in the socio-economic and political spheres.

This new session of the General Assembly is being held against the background of a continually changing global environment. That notwithstanding, there exists, on the one hand, a spirit of international cooperation and, on the other, a high degree of convergence of several ideals, such as the institution and strengthening of democracy, promoting and fostering economic integration and political harmony, and the pursuit and practice of a new multilateralism. Yet it must be expressly stated that the noble goal of achieving global democracy, peace and prosperity can be realized only with significant inputs from the developed countries acting in collaboration with the disadvantaged ones.

Currently, many of the small developing countries that are Members of this Organization are faced with severe economic problems. It cannot be overemphasized that measures aimed at stabilizing their economies and creating the conditions for sustained growth and development have very painful effects on the populace. Nonetheless, these effects can be made more bearable, and it behoves us to point specifically to the human dimension in this regard.

Since June 1995, the new Administration in Grenada has focused on strengthening our democratic institutions and on rebuilding our economy. My Government has been developing strategies, mechanisms and procedures to increase transparency and accountability in the conduct of Government. Moreover, my Government has pledged itself to respect the fundamental rights of all citizens as well as to other elements of civil society, such as a free press, freedom of expression, a fair and open democratic process, the supremacy under God of our Constitution and the effective functioning of the parliamentary system, for which our Constitution specifically and explicitly provides.

Economically, our domestic policies are aimed primarily at encouraging individuals and businesses to maximize the return on their enterprise and efforts. We have embraced the notion that promoting micro-enterprises is one of the ways to accomplish this goal. Only recently, we initiated a micro-enterprise programme, with the provision of a modest sum to help young entrepreneurs in particular to embark upon their several ventures. We hope that the programme will succeed, thereby contributing to our overall economic development, both materially and psycho-culturally. Such preferential treatment is being given to the young so as to better fashion a culture of confidence, thoughtful creativity and purposeful enterprise. We are actively seeking also to enhance opportunities to enable our working population to attain higher standards of living.

My Government has set itself specific goals including balanced and integrated sectoral growth, a relevant and adaptive education system, health for all, and strategic human resource planning and development. In this latter respect, priority is being placed on the development of an adequately skilled and disciplined work force.

While we are aware that the matter of economic and individual personal development is first and foremost a national responsibility, we are deeply conscious that our limited domestic resources constitute a severe constraint upon us in our quest to fulfil this obligation.

Accordingly, we earnestly ask — indeed we urge — the many United Nations agencies involved in such activities, and also individual Governments, to continue to provide to us and to others in the same position the kind of help that is needed to meet satisfactorily growing demand for the spectrum of expertise vital to our national development.

The grim realities of the very limited resources of very small countries are well known. Nonetheless, these realities have become more glaring in this era of trade liberalization and the globalization of production.

Both of these phenomena, as conceived and elaborated by the developed countries, are startling reminders to us not only of our condition of institutionalized non-reciprocating dependence in a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent, but also of our vulnerability to economic marginalization. Thus, we are in no way, and to no degree, inhibited with regard to addressing inviting profound reflection on the issue of the special circumstances of small island developing States — particularly those in the Caribbean region, where prominent among the features characterizing our special circumstances is the ever-present vulnerability to natural disaster and the widespread devastation resulting therefrom.

The need for official development assistance and the transfer of real resources from the North to the South has never been as pronounced as it is now. Indeed, such are the dimensions of that need in terms of both spread and intensity that the transfer of resources referred to here can be effected only on the basis of a concept of a new global order as was initially envisaged and expressed in principle by the President of Guyana, His Excellency Dr. Cheddi Jagan, and adopted by all the member States of the Caribbean Community.

This, no doubt, has to be elaborated, and the countries of the North are especially requested to give disciplined and objective consideration to this matter. The conceptual requirements of the new global order include: a reconstructive change in interaction between North and South; a new basis for interaction; a new ethic for relating one to the other; and a genuine partnership, a partnership which eschews exploitation of any one people by another and seeks instead to pursue mutual upliftment of the peoples involved.

More specifically, it is explicitly posited here that the developed countries should assist the less developed countries in respect of the following: first, the alleviation of the debt burden by one means or another; secondly, assistance for the development of centres for investment, the training of human resources, and training in how to make the economy more efficient, responsive and transparent; and thirdly, technical assistance to the smaller economies to help them make the transition towards incorporation and effective participation in a global economy that is so markedly characterized by so-called free trade. Smaller countries must not be excluded from processes which they cannot direct in their favour or, indeed, effectively influence so as to avoid experiencing the deleterious effects of those processes. Those are but a few of the tenets upon which the proffered concept of the new global order is based.

It is common knowledge that bananas provide a livelihood for a significant percentage of the people of the Caribbean, and particularly the subregion of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. Thus, the current challenge to our special arrangements for that fruit in Europe is, to say the least, uncaring, if not hostile. Grenada and several of the other States now being so affected have, on many issues, collaborated with and supported those very countries that are now quite unrelenting in their deliberate assault upon our preferential arrangement, which constitutes an assault on the well-being and the very livelihood of a significant proportion of our people.

There should be no need whatsoever to remind the Assembly that there is a direct correlation between the premature destruction of our banana industry and the well-being and integrity of our democratic process and thus of our democracy itself. Substantial increases in crime and other social ills have been shown to induce commensurate increases in involvement in trading in, and the use of, illicit drugs. We certainly prefer to prevent the occurrence of such situations than to have to expend our energies and scarce resources on remedial action to contain and eradicate the now ever-present threat of an expanding narco-culture.

It cannot be denied that, there are other, and more important, objectives to be achieved besides protecting the market economy. And this applies to all countries, the developed as well as the less developed. The time is now right for serious thrusts to be made towards the alleviation of the poverty and deprivation which are so widespread across the world, although most prevalent in the developing countries. This process must be activated immediately to ensure that economic progress is buttressed by social equity. Freedom from want; good health; genuine education; a clean environment; elimination of the scourge of illicit drugs, as well as of unemployment and underemployment; and the better and wider enjoyment of basic human rights: these are the goals we should unswervingly and constantly be seeking to reach.

In this context, my Government is cognizant of its duties and responsibilities. We are convinced that through prudent management of our very limited resources, a willingness on the part of our people to work hard and, on our part, clear political leadership and virtuously inspired guidance — all enhanced by the support of friendly Governments and donor agencies — we shall, in due course, place our country on a sound path towards genuine growth.

My delegation is happy to state in this regard that some improvement has already been made and that our Government looks forward to achieving in the not too distant future most of the goals we have set ourselves in order more effectively to pursue those other goals, which would significantly enhance the quality of our people's lives.

In the context of collective international efforts towards the achievement of some kind of sustainable development in the less developed countries, it is instructive to refer to the recently held Group of Seven summit in Lyon, France, where most of the efforts focused on the new global order.

The leaders of the world's most powerful nations agreed that in the present global economic situation it is absolutely necessary to control negative consequences and fight against the risks of exclusion, both at the national and international levels. Their communiqué, entitled "Globalization for the Benefit of All", does seem to signal the stirrings of a new order for humankind.

Grenada welcomes the discussion held on aid for development — particularly with officials from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — and is heartened by the fact that in those discussions modalities were defined for a new partnership for development based on the sharing of responsibilities between developed countries, developing countries and multilateral organizations.

The pledge by the G-7 countries to ensure substantial flows of public aid for development to the countries most in need is very timely and most welcome. Dare we of the South perceive this pronouncement by the G-7 to be not simply a pledge of honour but, further, an expression of subscription to the new global order, as enunciated by a visionary of the South, underscored now by a soulful shinning forth of virtue on the part of the North? My delegation sincerely hopes so.

It is several years since any substantial change was made to the structure of one of the most important organs of this Organization. I refer to the Security Council. Meanwhile, the international political and economic environments have undergone some drastic and far-reaching transformations. Grenada strongly believes that in order to reflect the new geopolitical and economic realities of our world today, there are changes that are now due, particularly in the Security Council. Accordingly, my delegation expresses its unwavering support for the reforms currently being undertaken, as well as those now being contemplated with respect to the United Nations system.

In July of this year, the European Union, through its Parliament, adopted a resolution to support the call for participation in international organizations by the Republic of China. The Government and people of Grenada consider this action on the part of the European Union to have been a most significant development. We welcome this development, and we applaud the European Union for it. Indeed, we are encouraged by that action, for the persistent plea of Grenada, constantly repeated over several years in every appropriate forum, has now been amplified into a clarion call for moral justice, in contrast to the expediency of power politics, economic advantage and legislative manipulation of yesteryear.

The Republic of China has for many years consistently displayed its commitment to the values and principles of this body. Indeed, in the face of threats and undisguised acts of aggression, the courageous people of the Republic of China boldly chose to embark upon a path of freedom, justice, and respect for human rights, and recently took part in their presidential election, which was open, free and fair.

The economic achievements of this brave country of 21.3 million people are well and widely known. Thus, there can be no doubt as to the capability of the people of the Republic of China to make substantial contributions to the work of the United Nations. As to their willingness to make significant contributions, that also cannot be a matter of doubt. They have given testimony in this regard in several ways. They have established their good faith. They deserve the right to participate in the conferences and activities of the United Nations system. To continue to deny them this right would be to persist in denying them justice within the confraternity of nations.

Superior power is found only where there is superior excellence of some kind, and the Republic of China has manifested a certain degree of superior power which derives from virtue rather than from physical strength. Thus, the Government and people of Grenada unequivocally exhort this Assembly to secure participation by the Republic of China in the agencies and activities of the United nations system.

With every passing year, contemporary politics becomes more complex and, thus, commensurately complex are the related solutions. In this regard, my delegation especially applauds the efforts of the United Nations in attempting to maintain some degree of peace and security in various parts of the world. From Haiti to the war-torn Republics of the former Yugoslavia, to the famine-stricken cities of many an African State, the United Nations humanitarian activities and missions of peace are indeed worthy of special commendation. In this regard, I seize the opportunity now afforded me to express a father's appreciation of and blessings upon my son Mark, who for some years has been and continues to be so engaged, and I ask your indulgence in this regard.

Grenada is encouraged by the progress — albeit halting — made in the Middle East peace process and urges continued dialogue until the noble ideal of peaceful coexistence is achieved. But world peace and security will not be attained if those countries with nuclear capabilities continue to promulgate their use for military purposes. My delegation therefore welcomes efforts to institute a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing.

Similarly, the practice of transporting hazardous radioactive materials, particularly through the Caribbean Sea, must be stopped immediately. The very surreptitiousness with which this business is conducted and transportation effected is indeed a tacit admission of wrongdoing. Caribbean humanness is violated in such transactions. In the name of humanity, therefore, the Government and the people of Grenada, without equivocation and without qualification, call for this practice to be stopped, and stopped now.

It has been suggested by Max Ascoli that

> "civilization is a constant quest for non-violent means of solving conflicts — a common quest for peace."

Nonetheless, my Government perceives civilization as being more than simply a quest for peace, more than merely the shunning of visible violence. My Government sees civilization as the purposeful pursuit of peace through commitment to justice; the inherent equality of all men and women; and the inalienable rights which derive from simply being human. My Government subscribes to the principle of the overriding rule of moral law.

In the context of violations of humanness, it behoves me to express, on behalf of my delegation, the deep concern of the Government and the people of Grenada in respect of the agonies which are currently being experienced by a significant number of persons in Cyprus. Grenada, like Cyprus, is an island nation, small, but sovereign. We therefore call for an end to the suffering to which so many of the families and individual persons of that beautiful country have been subjected. The smallness of a nation does not, to any degree whatever, negate the fundamental human rights of each of its citizens.

The great Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran, in his *Thoughts and Meditations*, offered humanity the following insightful observation:

> "My soul preached to me and showed me that I am neither more than the pygmy, nor less than the giant. Ere my soul preached to me, I looked upon humanity as two men; one weak, whom I pitied, and the other strong, whom I followed or resisted in defiance. But now I have learned that I am as both are, and made from the same elements. My origin is their origin, my conscience is their conscience, my contention is their contention, and my pilgrimage is their pilgrimage."

My delegation is deeply convinced of the unsurpassable wisdom which these words of Khalil Gibran represent. The sentiment conveyed constitutes the *sine qua non* for the realization of international brotherhood. This we do believe.

Accordingly, my delegation earnestly urges that henceforth the quintessential sameness of all mankind and a genuine commitment to virtue should be adopted as the guiding principles of this Assembly. May God bless everyone participating in this fifty-first regular session of the Assembly, so that, so much the more effectively, the Assembly will be a transforming blessing to our world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Lesotho, His Excellency Mr. Perch Metsing Mangoaela, on whom I now call.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): I wish to extend my delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. It is with great pleasure that I assure you of Lesotho's support and cooperation as you conduct the deliberations of this body. Let me also take this opportunity to pay special tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the skilful manner in which he guided the work of the historic session of the General Assembly last year. My delegation truly appreciates his leadership and his tireless dedication to the heavy responsibilities entrusted to him during the past year.

I also take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the sterling work that the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has been doing under the very difficult conditions of reduced financial resources. Were it not for his tenacity, our Organization would not have been able to hold together as it has done.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations last year provided an opportunity for reflection about the global mission of our Organization. We retraced our past and took stock of the failures and notable successes that the United Nations had engraved in the historic record of half a century of its existence. We also looked ahead with renewed determination, resolved to create for mankind a future that would be brighter than the past, amidst the euphoria of hope and expectation in the new international order that is still emerging from the ashes of the cold war.

Even as we did so, we were aware how great the potential was for a relapse to the pitfalls of past years and for the re-emergence of complacencies that could render our new hopes and expectations vain and futile. A deliberate effort is required on the part of the international community to build on the past experiences of our Organization and to identify and reinforce the positive trends that the end of the cold war era has yielded.

The first half-century was characterized by cold-war conflicts, the struggle against colonialism, the constant threat of a nuclear holocaust and the fight against apartheid. All these are either behind us or considerably abated. Our attention must remain focused on how we can give the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped to serve as an effective instrument in the evolving global environment for the attainment of the noble goals enshrined in its Charter.

A universal consensus for the reform and revitalization of the United Nations was highlighted in the solemn Declaration that was adopted in this very Hall a year ago by, *inter alia*, 128 world Heads of State and Government. The momentum for the realization of that aspiration and for the implementation of the commitments that were made by the world community should not be lost. The actions and the path that we have to take are known to all of us.

We would like to see a more democratized United Nations, whose credibility and legitimacy are enhanced by the representativeness of its structures.

We have identified the need for measures to ensure greater consultation between the Security Council and the General Assembly, particularly on crisis situations, and the need to restore the role and authority of the General Assembly in the decision-making processes of our Organization, without compromising the speed with which the Security Council may take its decisions.

We have cautioned against regional selectivity in the attention paid by our Organization to international crisis situations and have advocated a demonstration of good faith and the upholding of the principle of the sanctity of human life in the enforcement of United Nations resolutions.

We have also stood in favour of exploring a new, balanced formula for equitable burden-sharing, as well as for a renewed commitment on the part of all Member

States to fulfil their financial obligations to the United Nations in full and on time, just as we have joined in the call to effect economies and improve efficiency through the transformation of the management techniques within the United Nations system.

The events and experiences we have witnessed since the last session of the Assembly once again present us with mixed signals. On the one hand, we have seen a steady expansion of the frontiers of peace, tolerance and democracy, while, on the other, some problems that are rooted in the past not only have persisted but have been compounded by new challenges arising from the evolving international environment.

Thanks to the efforts of the international community, the carnage in the former Yugoslavia has been brought to an end. However, a conscious effort is still required to give permanence to the positive trends that are still evolving in Bosnia and to suppress the ever present risk that the peace dividends already gained can be reversed.

In the Middle East uncertainty and the new obstacles that have emerged in the path of a negotiated peace have thrown new doubts over the prospects for an early restoration to the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination and statehood. We appeal to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to adhere in good faith to the provisions of the peace agreements they have concluded and to implement them within the agreed time-frame, pursuant to the Declaration of Principles they signed in Washington in 1993.

The prerequisite for peace remains the withdrawal of Israel and the cessation of the establishment of new Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, in compliance with the resolutions of the United Nations.

In Western Sahara recent developments have demonstrated that peace in that area remains elusive. How long will the will of the Saharan people for self-determination and independence be frustrated? The withdrawal of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara in May of this year due to the lack of cooperation by the parties raises a real prospect for a resumption of violence. The international community must act now to reverse the tragic trends and to persuade the parties to cooperate in the implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Western Sahara.

In Burundi, Liberia and Somalia the situation regrettably continues to defy the efforts of the international community to restore peace and stability. We appeal to the international community to support the current initiatives spearheaded by the Organization of African Unity and the neighbouring countries of Burundi aimed at protecting democracy in that country.

Lesotho shares Africa's deep disappointment at the demonstrable lack of interest on the part of the international community in extending the necessary material support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) countries that are engaged in the regional peacekeeping effort in Liberia. This, regrettably, calls into question the world's commitment to the universality of the sanctity of human life.

Despite the remaining hotbeds of instability, fortunately all is not doom and gloom in Africa, even in the area of conflict resolution. The major strides that have been made in southern Africa to free the subregion of conflicts is a source of great satisfaction. If the momentum for peace is kept in Angola, there is no doubt that a subregion long associated with conflicts will have established durable peace and stability. The implementation of the Lusaka Protocol — particularly the establishment of a unified army and the formation of the Government of National Unity — are within reach, and with more concerted action by the international community should soon be attained.

Throughout southern Africa, political stability, peace, democracy and human rights continue to be deepened. Multiparty general elections are being held, and other political and constitutional reforms are being put in place to ensure transparency and predictability, especially in the electoral systems.

The establishment by the Southern African Development Community of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security reaffirms the region's resolve to consolidate the gains that have been bequeathed by the demise of apartheid and to face head-on the challenges of peace and democracy.

These measures have contributed to the strong performance registered by the national economies of southern Africa in 1995, as well as to the improvement in the overall investment climate of the region. We hope that the international community will continue to assist southern Africa in its reconstruction efforts, particularly by encouraging the flow of private investment as a contribution to the regional efforts for the economic recovery of the subcontinent.

The past 12 months have presented the world with great opportunities for the attainment of durable peace. Yet, I regret to say, we have sometimes failed to take advantage of them. A scourge that has stalked humankind for the past 50 years has been the growth in the arsenal of armaments, especially nuclear ones. Last year, in a historic achievement, the nations of the world agreed to extend indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In doing so they undertook to achieve a comprehensive test-ban treaty by September of this year.

It is with unbounded joy that we are able to stand here today and say that that goal has been attained. To be sure, it was not attained with ease, but the fact that it was achieved is a source of great encouragement that humankind is slowly but surely moving towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Although Lesotho shares the view that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that was adopted here in New York last month is not perfect, we regard it as a giant step forward that will serve to put the nuclear-weapon States on notice that the rest of the international community is serious about its aspiration to a nuclear-free world.

In spite of the fact that the cold war has ended and that the START Treaties have been concluded, tens of thousands of nuclear weapons are still deployed by nuclear States, and there is a very real possibility that many more States could develop such weapons.

Worldwide opposition to weapons of mass destruction has resulted in Conventions banning biological and chemical weapons, but as yet there are no concrete proposals to negotiate a similar convention to outlaw nuclear weapons. The fact that nuclear weapons are not prohibited by convention weakens the willingness of many non-nuclear States to abide by the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. These States perceive an imbalance in the retention of certain types of weapons of mass destruction by some States, mostly States of the North, while other weapons of mass destruction, often held by States of the South — are banned.

Lesotho believes that the proliferation of nuclear-weapons technology and the manufacture of nuclear weapons constitute a very serious problem which the international community cannot and must not ignore.

The fact that only a handful of people have been brought to justice for the millions of crimes against humanity and the serious violations of humanitarian law committed since the end of the Second World War has not altered the international community's view that perpetrators of international crimes should be tried and punished for their acts. More recently, the growing global outrage against international crimes has been demonstrated by the creation of the two ad hoc International Tribunals for the prosecution of crimes in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda. These Tribunals were established by the Security Council to have jurisdiction over the most heinous crimes in the world: genocide, other crimes against humanity and serious violations of humanitarian law.

It is therefore a matter of concern that since their inception both Tribunals have been plagued by inadequate and short-term financing and have not received adequate budgets from this Assembly. It is also a matter of concern that very few Member States have enacted legislation permitting effective cooperation with the Tribunals.

The international community must send a clear message to those who commit genocide and other crimes against humanity that they cannot escape to fully account for their actions before international law. We can do this by providing the much-needed support and resources to enable the ad hoc International Tribunals to bring to justice those who are responsible for atrocities both in Bosnia and in Rwanda.

Although Lesotho has not yet promulgated implementation legislation for the Tribunals, it remains committed to fully cooperating with the two Tribunals in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions. We hope that the international community can build on the experiences and the already noteworthy success achieved by these Tribunals to pursue the project of the establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

While we recognize the important work of the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, we are of the view that the General Assembly should enhance the Preparatory Committee's work by mandating it to begin serious negotiations of a consolidated draft treaty based on the International Law Commission's 1994 draft statute. The present momentum for the establishment of a permanent international criminal tribunal should not be lost, but should be matched by commensurate political will to ensure that the work is completed in time for a conference in 1998.

Development and the promotion of international cooperation as enshrined in the Charter, will continue to be the principal objectives of the United Nations. The recently concluded mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has shown that many of the social and economic problems which led to the adoption of the Agenda in 1991 still exist and that poverty and unemployment in Africa are expected to increase substantially. Furthermore, the estimated resource mobilization levels in the Agenda are still far from being attained.

Consequently, the mid-term review recommended that African Governments should continue to promote, *inter alia*, economic reforms, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and administrative reform. For their part, international partners should seek to mobilize substantial new resources from all sources — public and private — and from traditional and new sources, to find a solution to Africa's external debt problem and to enhance Africa's recovery through trade facilitation and improved market access.

The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which was launched by the Secretary-General in March this year, promises to break new ground by assuring the cooperation of the whole system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, in tackling the intractable problem of accelerating the development of the African continent.

While this expression of interest in our continent is appreciated, we must also stress that the implementation of the several initiatives currently on the table must be carried out in very close consultation with the African countries themselves, to avoid the duplication of efforts. The Organization of African Unity's Cairo Plan of Action is relevant in this regard.

As we engage in this introspection one year after our historic Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, it is pertinent to inquire to what extent we are all fulfilling our commitment undertaken during the various global conferences, all of which — except the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights — have a development dimension. Perhaps the one that towers above all others in its significance for alleviating the plight of citizens of least developed countries, such as mine, is last year's Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

In Lesotho there is a serious effort to attain the target of devoting 20 per cent of our budget to the health and education sectors, but we have not witnessed a corresponding commitment on the part of our development partners, as was agreed at Copenhagen.

The Commission for Social Development has been given the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Commitment 2 of the Declaration and chapter II of the Programme of Action both deal with the goal of poverty eradication. In this connection, 1997 is a crucial year, being the first year of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

By its resolution 50/161, the General Assembly decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal and of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and to consider further actions and initiatives. We support the view that, to enable this to happen, the Commission should meet annually, that the length of its sessions should be extended and that its membership should be increased.

Measures to ensure that women have the same degree of access as men to economic resources and opportunities are of equal importance for the attainment of economic progress. Poverty can be eradicated only through the empowerment of the poor. United Nations efforts should therefore be coordinated in such a manner that all its activities for poverty eradication fully take into account the gender perspective.

The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was supposed to be followed by the revision of all laws that act as an impediment to the social and economic advancement of women. In Lesotho this goal, although not yet reached, is still being actively pursued.

Lesotho has joined the other countries of southern Africa in signing two Protocols to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty recently, one of which deals with politics, defence and security and the other with cooperation in combating transboundary crime, especially trafficking in narcotics and money-laundering.

A central element of the Protocol establishing an Organ on Politics, Defence and Security is the commitment to work for the protection and promotion of human rights in the region. Our endeavours in this regard are intended to reinforce the United Nations own programmes.

The increase in crime, particularly transnational crime, has a considerable effect on the economies of many countries. New worldwide strategies are therefore urgently needed for combating this malaise. However, developing countries cannot bear the economic burden of combating transnational crime by themselves. Technical cooperation and assistance activities to develop the criminal-justice capacities of developing countries should therefore be accorded a high priority.

The activities of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division — particularly its training courses, seminars and workshops for criminal-justice personnel — are to be commended.

Let me conclude by observing that together we have the capacity to make the United Nations of the next century a veritable instrument for meeting mankind's aspirations for a better world in all respects. In our interdependent world, the United Nations has to become an efficient working forum for searching for universal consensus, a conscious regulator of the integration processes and a vehicle for establishing a stable world order.

We have deep confidence in the potential of the joint efforts of the entire international community in its capability to enter the twenty-first century in an atmosphere of peace, development and joint creative work, and to provide comprehensive security for all, as is called for by the priority interests of humankind.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.